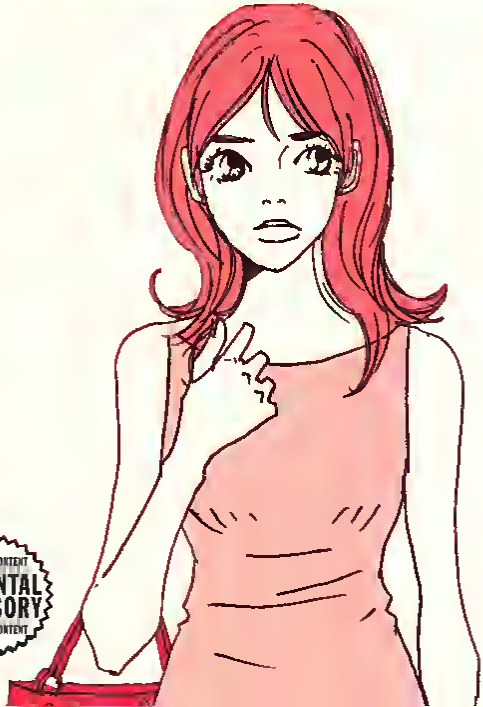
erica

SAKURAZAWA™

the aromatic bitters



EXPLICIT CONTENT
PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

FEELINGS LIKE
LOVE AND PAIN...

...ARE STILL LEFT
IN MY HEART.

I DON'T KNOW WHY.

桜沢エリカ

The Aromatic Bitters

アロマチック・ビターズ

the aromatic bitters

BY ERICA SAKURAZAWA

TOKYOPOP®
LOS ANGELES • TOKYO • LONDON

contents

act. 1
13

act. 2
47

act. 3
73

act. 4
103

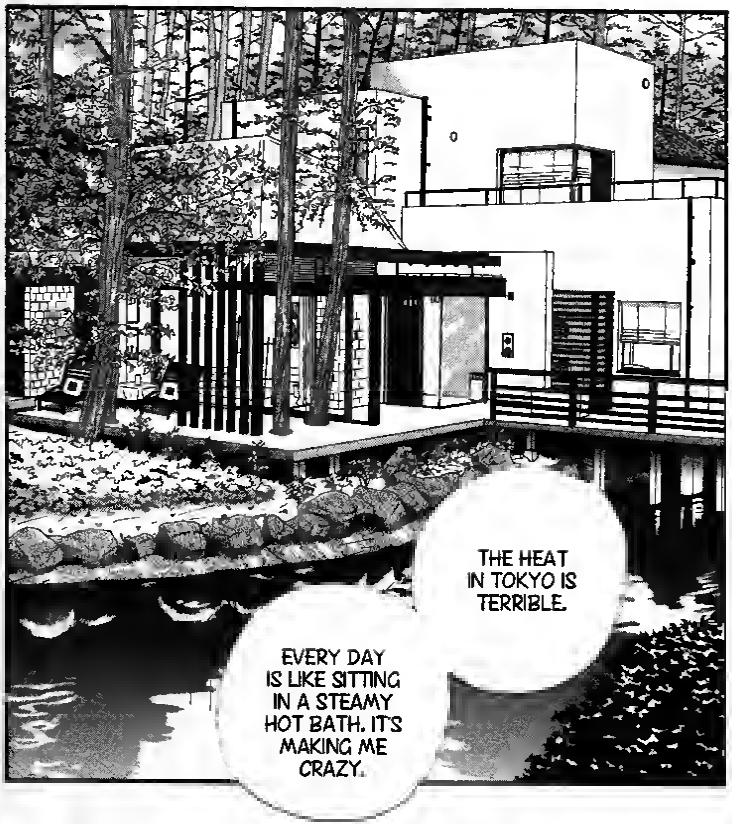
act. 5
137

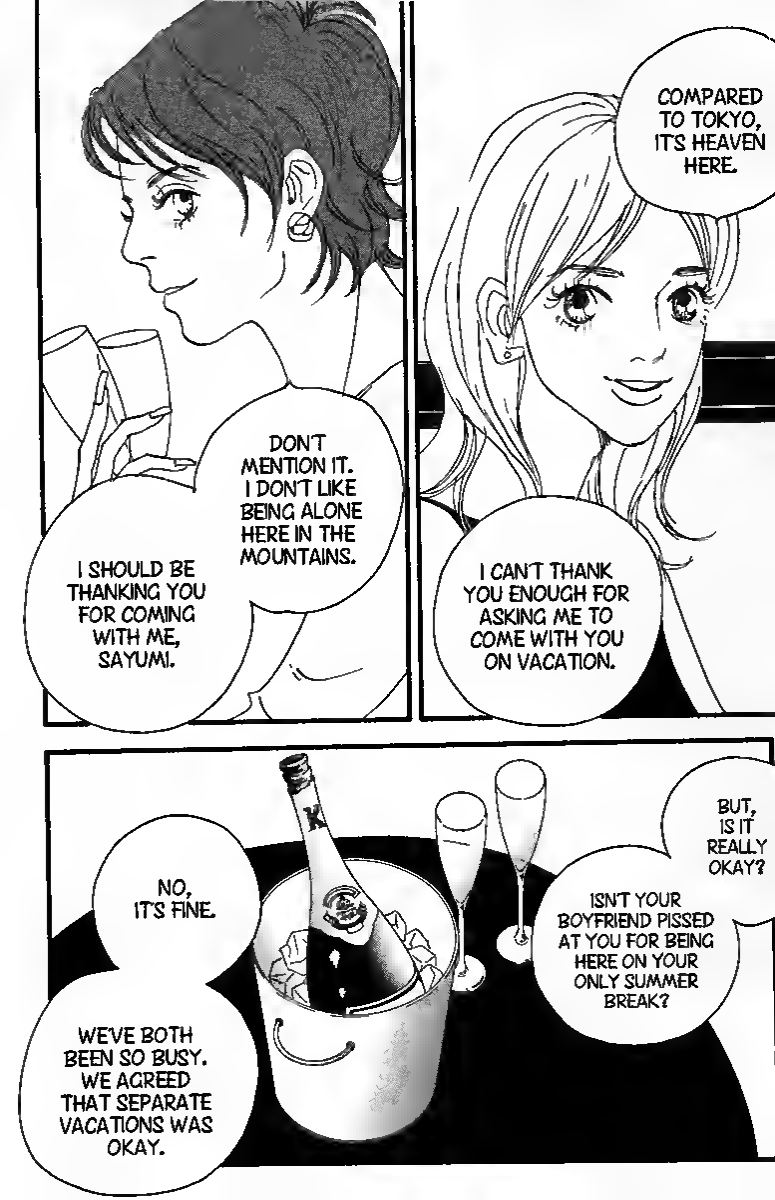
The Accounts Rotten

act. 1

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE DIDN'T SPEND OUR VACATION TOGETHER.

THIS IS THE FIFTH YEAR THAT I'VE BEEN LIVING WITH HIROYUKI.

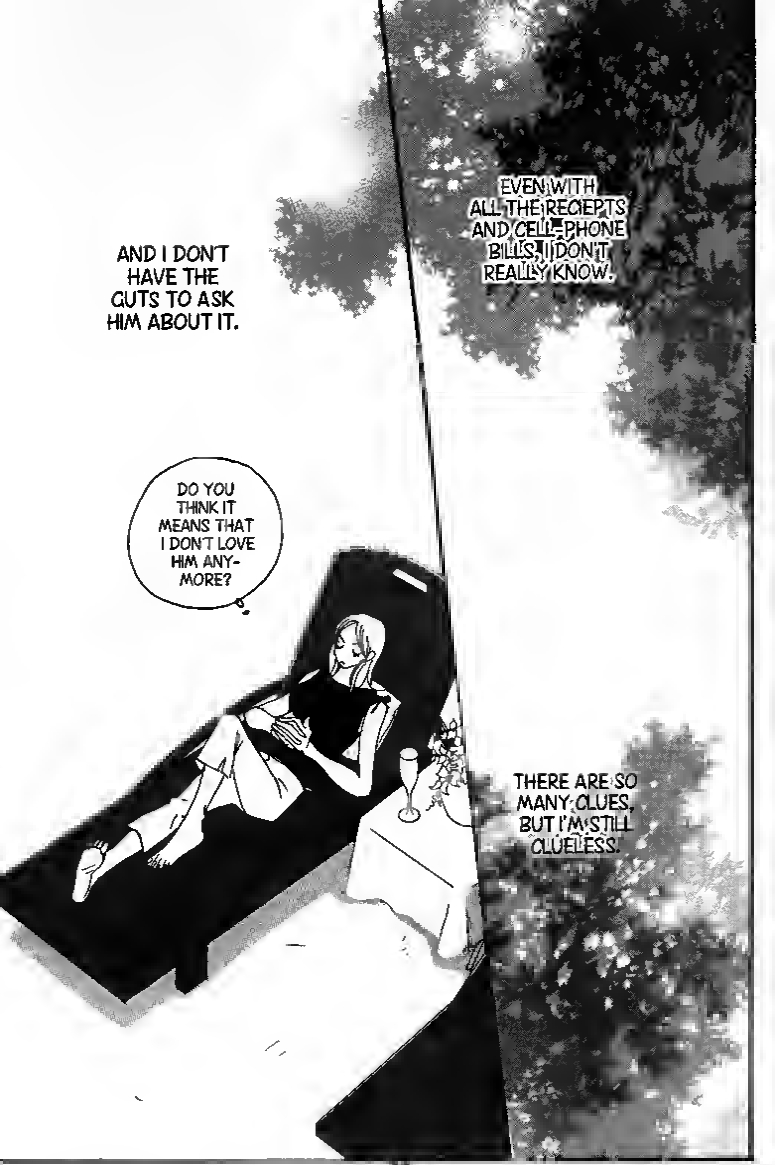



I SHOULD BE THANKING YOU FOR COMING WITH ME, SAYUMI.
DON'T MENTION IT. I DON'T LIKE BEING ALONE HERE IN THE MOUNTAINS.
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR ASKING ME TO COME WITH YOU ON VACATION.
COMPARED TO TOKYO, IT'S HEAVEN HERE.
WE'VE BOTH BEEN SO BUSY. WE AGREED THAT SEPARATE VACATIONS WAS OKAY.
NO, IT'S FINE.
ISN'T YOUR BOYFRIEND PISSED AT YOU FOR BEING HERE ON YOUR ONLY SUMMER BREAK?
BUT, IS IT REALLY OKAY?

I'M HAPPY TO STAY AT SUCH A PRETTY VACATION HOME, EVEN IF I AM A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR DOGGIE.
I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU... WELL, IT WAS BAD TIMING WITH CHOCOLATE GETTING SICK AND GOING INTO THE HOSPITAL.
HE HAS NO IDEA HOW I FELT...
...WHEN I SAW THAT JUST SITTING THERE.
NO MATTER WHAT HE DID BEFORE, I'M REALLY MAD AT MY HUSBAND THIS TIME.
CAN YOU BELIEVE HE LEFT A RECEIPT FROM THE PARK HYATT HOTEL ON THE TABLE...?

I'M GONNA SQUEEZE HIM FOR EVERYTHING.
I'M READY TO DIVORCE HIS ASS.
I'LL GET THE HOUSE HERE AND THE ONE IN TOKYO, TOO.
SHE LOOKS LIKE A TEENAGER WITH A BIG SMILE ON HER FACE WHEN SHE TELLS ME STORIES OF HOW THEY MAKE UP AFTER A FIGHT.
BEFORE WE LEAVE, WE SHOULD EMPTY THE WINE CELLAR.
SHE SAYS THAT EVERY TIME, BUT AFTER A FEW DAYS, SHE MAKES UP WITH HIM.
WOW! EXCELLENT.
I THINK I HID A ROMANEE CONTI IN THE BACK OF THE CELLAR...

WHEN DID HIROYUKI START GOING OUT OF TOWN FOR "BUSINESS"?
ANYWAY, I REALLY FEEL GREAT.

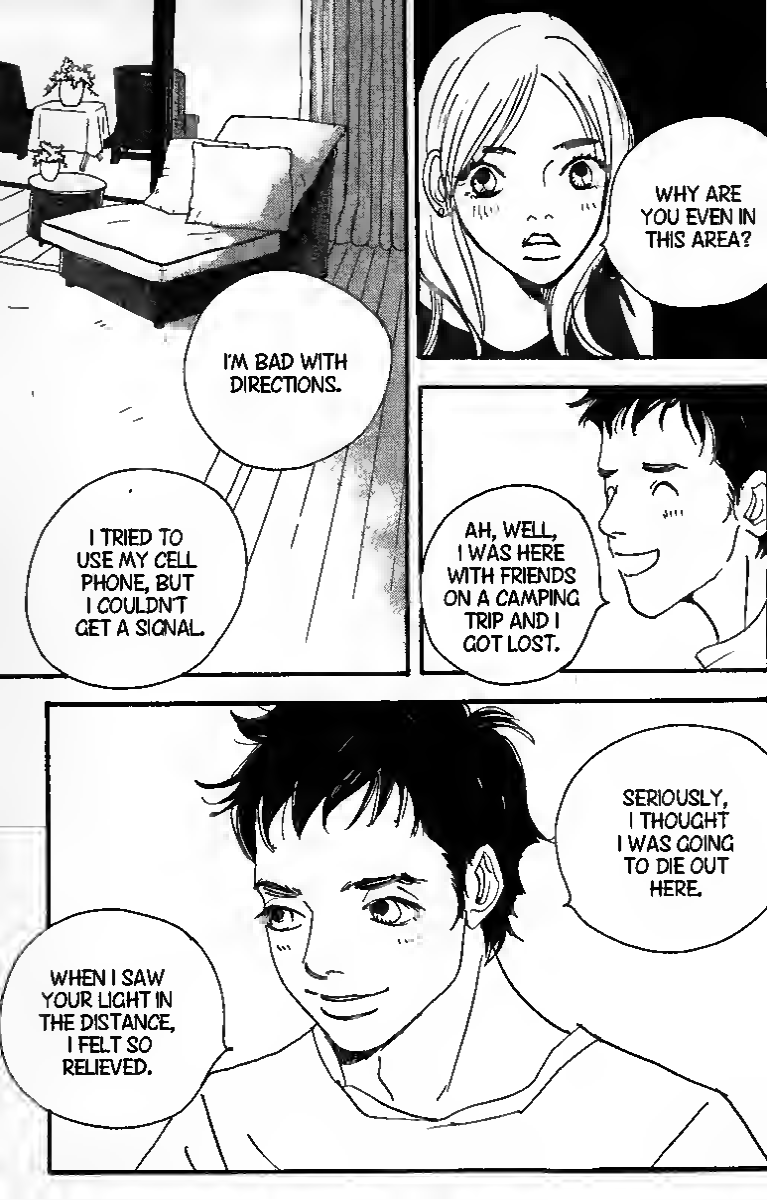

AND I DON'T HAVE THE GUTS TO ASK HIM ABOUT IT.
EVEN WITH ALL THE RECEIPTS AND CELL-PHONE BILLS, I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
DO YOU THINK IT MEANS THAT I DON'T LOVE HIM ANY-MORE?
THERE ARE SO MANY CLUES, BUT I'M STILL CLUELESS.

ガサ
HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF I COULD ARGUE WITH HIM LIKE HIDE DOES WITH HER HUSBAND.
ガサ
ガササ
!!

...SOMEONE'S HERE...
OH, GREAT...
AAAAH!!

OH, SORRY. I'M SORRY!!
AAH! AAH! AAH!
CALM DOWN, SAYUMI.
I'VE BEEN LOST SINCE YESTERDAY, AND I WAS AFRAID THAT I WAS GONNA BE LOST FOREVER!!
ANYWAY, CAN I HAVE A GLASS OF WATER?

THIS IS REALLY GOOD...
IT'S STRANGE. A BACCARAT GLASS MAKES PLAIN TAP WATER THAT MUCH BETTER.
I HAD NO IDEA THAT I COULD DRINK WATER IN A BACCARAT GLASS ON THIS MOUNTAIN...
PLUS, WITH THESE BEAUTIFUL LADIES...
EXCUSE ME, BUT THIS TAP WATER IS SPRING WATER. IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE WATER IN TOKYO.


I'M BAD WITH DIRECTIONS.
I TRIED TO USE MY CELL PHONE, BUT I COULDN'T GET A SIGNAL.
WHY ARE YOU EVEN IN THIS AREA?
AH, WELL, I WAS HERE WITH FRIENDS ON A CAMPING TRIP AND I GOT LOST.
SERIOUSLY, I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE OUT HERE.
WHEN I SAW YOUR LIGHT IN THE DISTANCE, I FELT SO RELIEVED.

グゥゥゥゥー
OOPS. GUESS I'M HUNGRY.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US FOR DINNER?
YOU'RE PROBABLY STARVED.
WOW! REALLY?!
IT'S NOTHING FANCY, JUST SOME BASIC STUFF.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

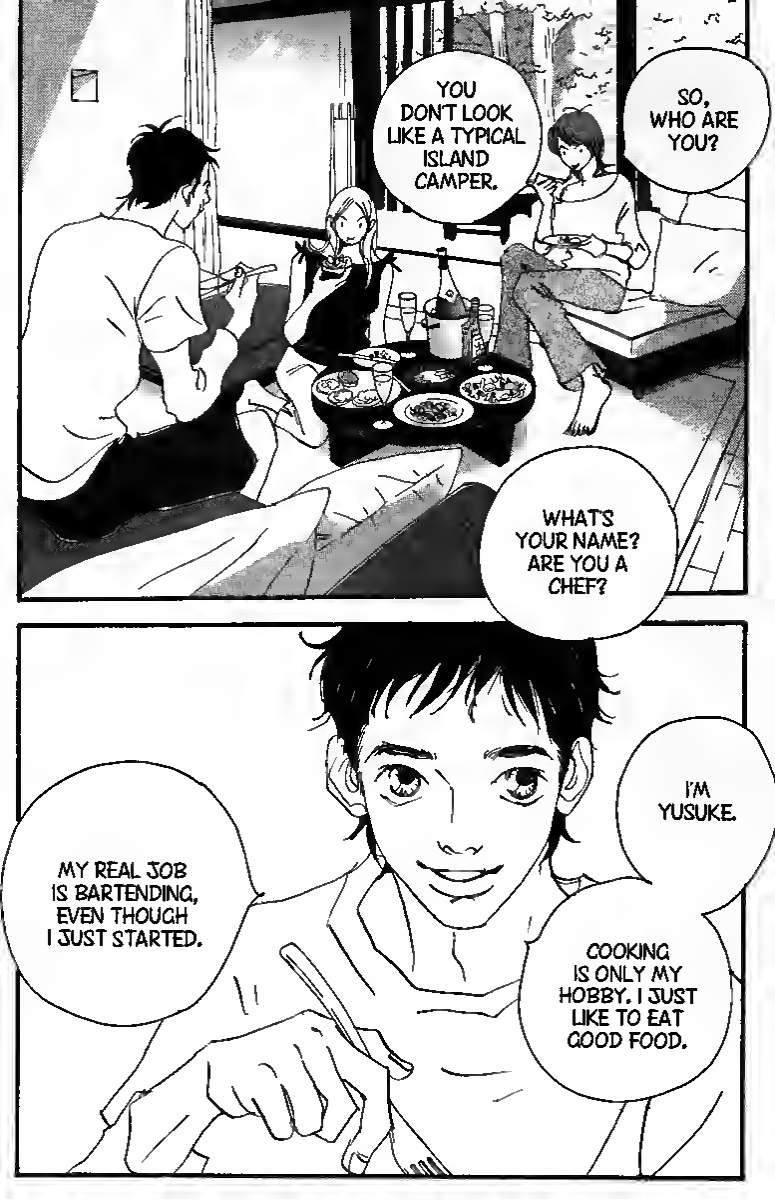
YOU REALLY DO ONLY HAVE BASIC INGREDIENTS...
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY COMPLAINING?!
THIS IS OUR VACATION, SO WE DON'T WANNA COOK ANYTHING.

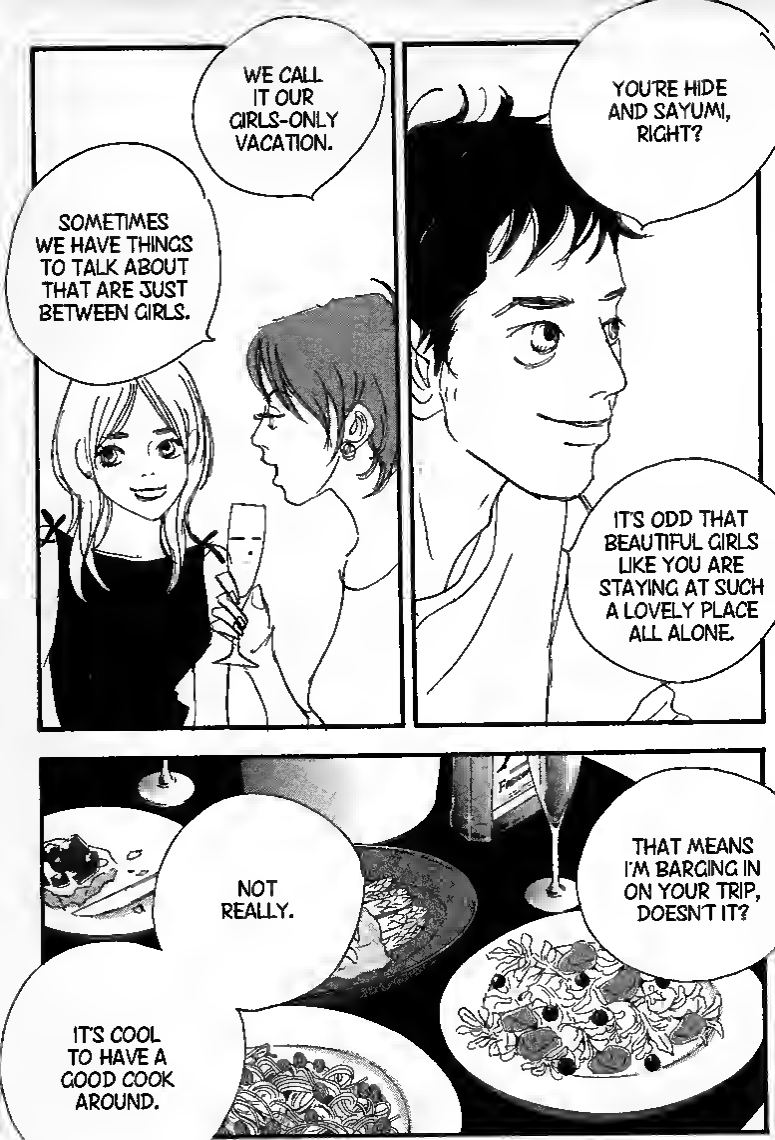
HAM, MELON AND CHEESE...
MINERVA
...OLIVES, AND A CAN OF ASPARAGUS...

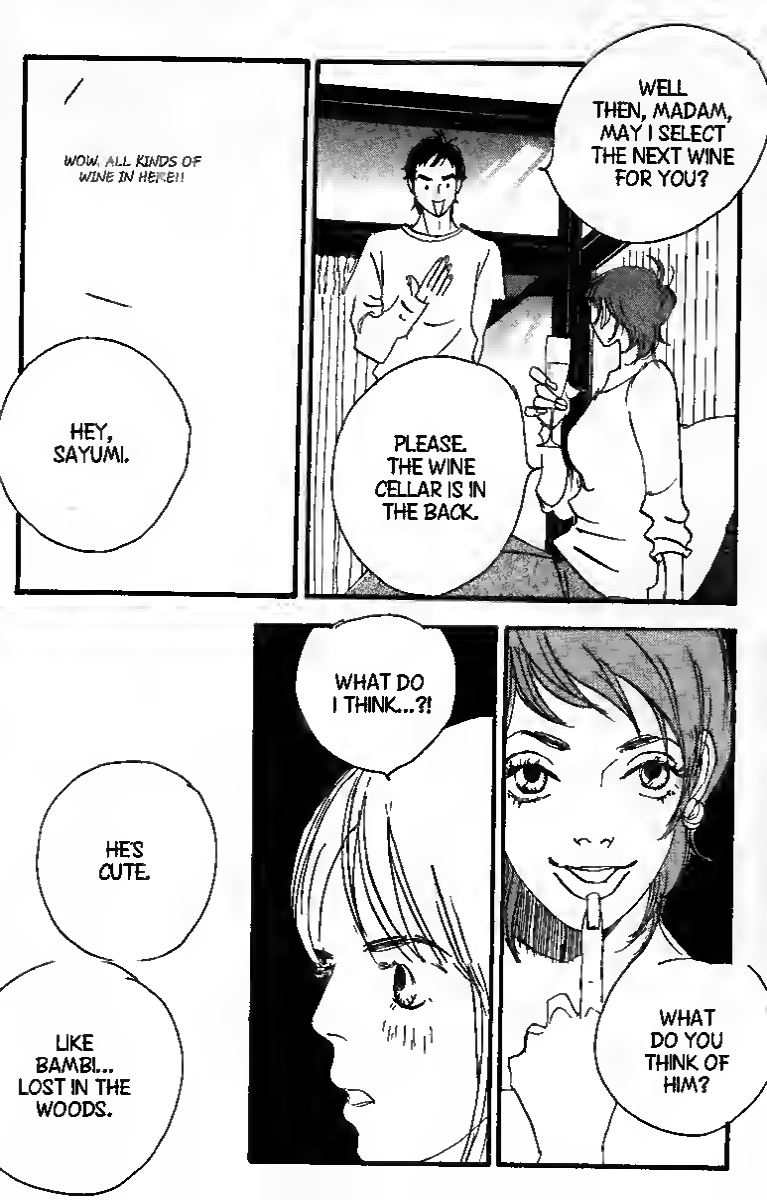
SO, CAN I PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER?

I CAN DO IT. THERE'S PLENTY TO WORK WITH.
IS IT REALLY OKAY, HIDE?
...LETTING A STRANGER USE YOUR KITCHEN?
SAYUMI, TAKE IT EASY.
HE COULD BE THE PERFECT VISITOR TO HELP PASS THE TIME.

I'M SO IMPRESSED. A MINUTE AGO, THEY WERE ALL JUST RANDOM ITEMS, BUT NOW THEY'VE ALL TURNED OUT TO BE...
YEAH, LOOKS GREAT.
UNBELIEVABLE!!
LAUDE
FRESCOBAL
LET'S DIG IN.


SO, WHO ARE YOU?
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A TYPICAL ISLAND CAMPER.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME? ARE YOU A CHEF?
I'M YUSUKE.
COOKING IS ONLY MY HOBBY. I JUST LIKE TO EAT GOOD FOOD.
MY REAL JOB IS BARTENDING, EVEN THOUGH I JUST STARTED.

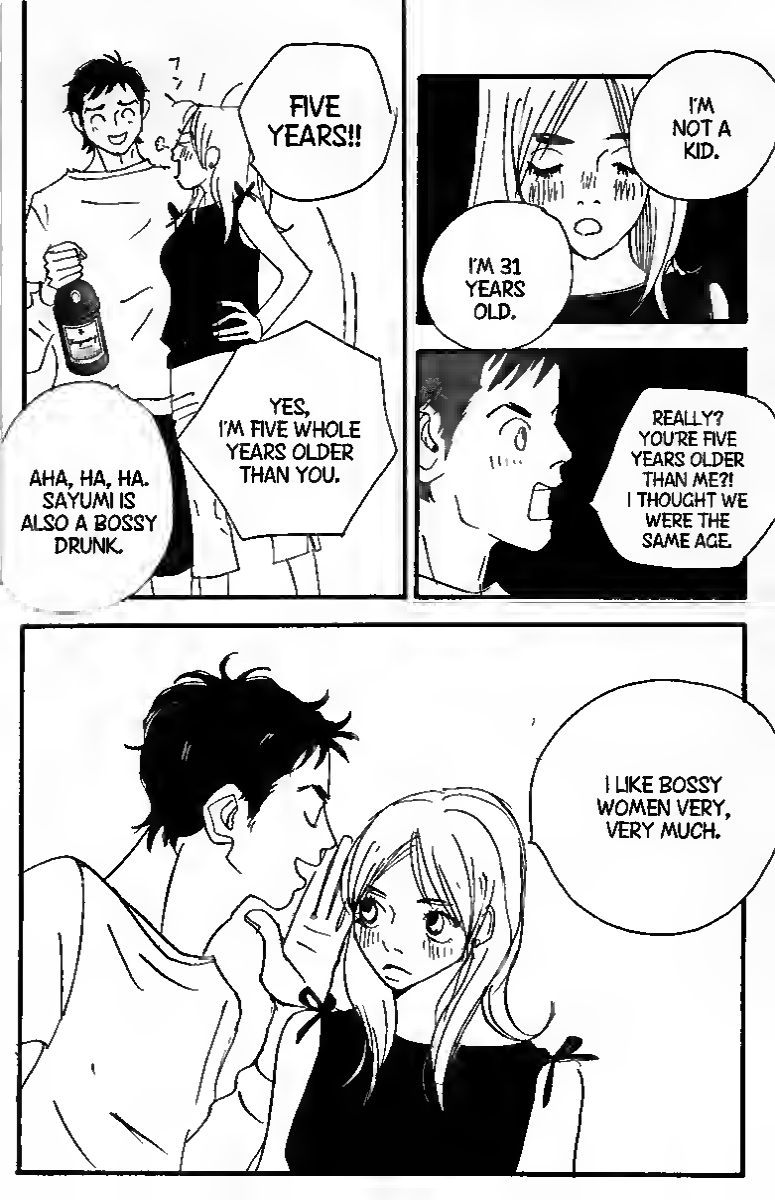

WE CALL IT OUR GIRLS-ONLY VACATION.
SOMETIMES WE HAVE THINGS TO TALK ABOUT THAT ARE JUST BETWEEN GIRLS.
YOU'RE HIDE AND SAYUMI, RIGHT?
IT'S ODD THAT BEAUTIFUL GIRLS LIKE YOU ARE STAYING AT SUCH A LOVELY PLACE ALL ALONE.
NOT REALLY.
IT'S COOL TO HAVE A GOOD COOK AROUND.
THAT MEANS I'M BARGING IN ON YOUR TRIP, DOESN'T IT?


WOW. ALL KINDS OF WINE IN HERE!!
HEY, SAYUMI.
PLEASE. THE WINE CELLAR IS IN THE BACK.
WELL THEN, MADAM, MAY I SELECT THE NEXT WINE FOR YOU?
WHAT DO I THINK...?!
HE'S CUTE.
LIKE BAMBI... LOST IN THE WOODS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIM?

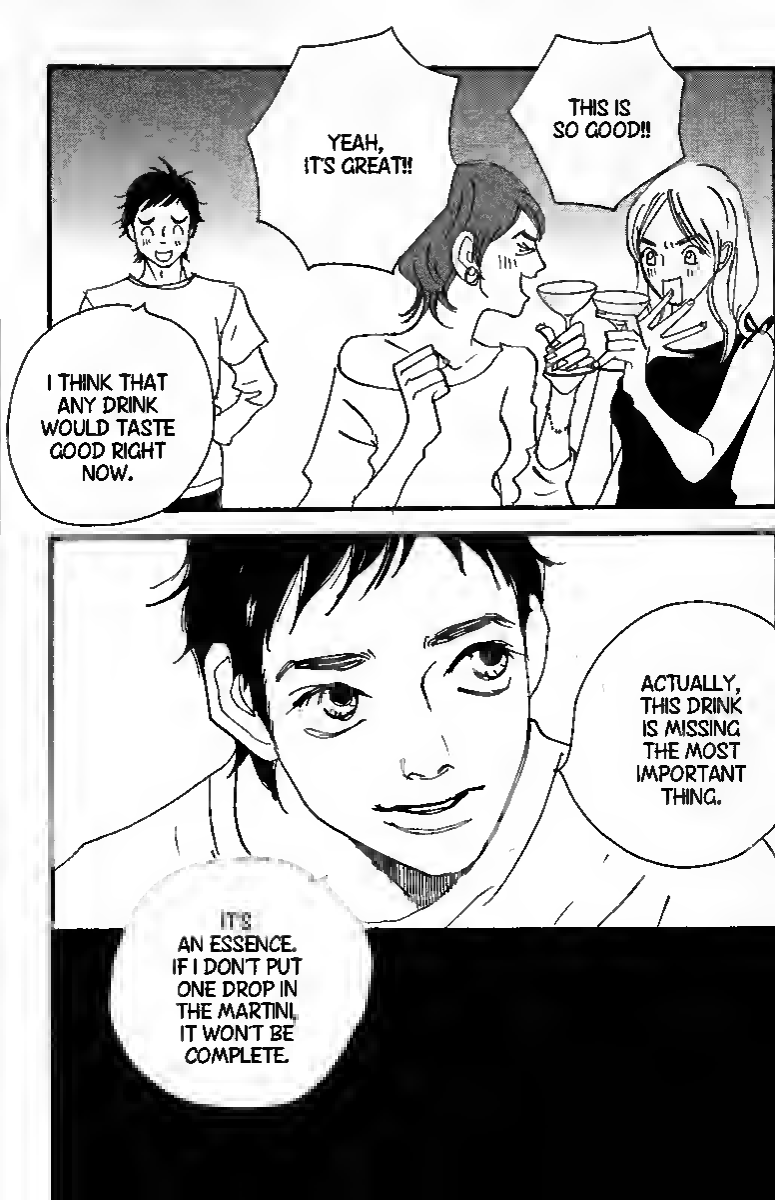
...THERE AREN'T MANY CUTE BOYS WHO KNOW HOW TO COOK.
AND, KEY DETAIL...
THINGS AREN'T SO GREAT WITH YOUR BOY-FRIEND, ARE THEY?
HOW ABOUT A NEW LOVE?
THIS MAY BE DESTINY.
THE LITTLE PRINCESS ALWAYS MEETS HER PRINCE IN THE WOODS, RIGHT?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU SHOULD DRINK MORE!
アハハハ
YOU, SAYUMI!!
SERIOUSLY I CAN'T DRINK ANOTHER DROP
HEY, YUSUKE, MAKE A COCKTAIL.
HA, HA...
AHA, HA...
ゲラゲラ
I CAN'T DRINK ANYMORE.
ワハハ
HIDE, YOU'RE BOSSY WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK.
YOU ACT LIKE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON.

THE MINI BAR IS LOADED WITH ALL KINDS OF BOOZE
LET'S SEE... MAKE HER A COCKTAIL.
THERE'S A BOTTLE OF GIN HERE. HOW ABOUT A MARTINI?
Tanqueray
IMPORTED
LONDON DRY GIN
MARTINI?
I'VE NEVER HAD SUCH AN ADULT DRINK.
SAYUMI, YOU'RE SUCH A LITTLE KID...


FIVE YEARS!!
YES, I'M FIVE WHOLE YEARS OLDER THAN YOU.
AHA, HA, HA. SAYUMI IS ALSO A BOSSY DRUNK.
I'M NOT A KID.
I'M 31 YEARS OLD.
REALLY? YOU'RE FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN ME?! I THOUGHT WE WERE THE SAME AGE.
I LIKE BOSSY WOMEN VERY, VERY MUCH.

MAKE MY MARTINI REALLY DRY.
CERTAINLY, MA'AM.
I ADDED LEMON PEEL IN HIDE'S MARTINI.
FOR SAYUMI, I PUT EXTRA VERMOUTH AND OLIVE JUICE.
UGH! SINCE HIDE MENTIONED HOOKING UP WITH HIM A LITTLE WHILE AGO...
...I'M THINKING BAD THOUGHTS...


I THINK THAT ANY DRINK WOULD TASTE GOOD RIGHT NOW.
YEAH, IT'S GREAT!!
THIS IS SO GOOD!!
ACTUALLY, THIS DRINK IS MISSING THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.
IT'S AN ESSENCE. IF I DON'T PUT ONE DROP IN THE MARTINI, IT WON'T BE COMPLETE.

I CAN MAKE YOU A SERIOUSLY PRO MARTINI.
SAYUMI.
WHEN YOUR VACATION IS OVER, I HOPE YOU'LL COME TO THE BAR WHERE I WORK.
YOU'RE MARRIED, AREN'T YOU?
HEY, WHY HAVEN'T YOU ASKED ME TO COME TO YOUR BAR, TOO?
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN PISSING OFF A HUSBAND.

I'M NOT YOUNG LIKE YOU TWO ANYMORE.
MY SKIN PAYS THE PRICE WHEN I STAY UP TOO LATE.
I'M GONNA GO TO BED NOW.
THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL DRINK.
GOOD NIGHT.
HAVE A GREAT EVENING.
WHAT, HIDE?! I THOUGHT WE WERE GONNA PARTY UNTIL DAWN!

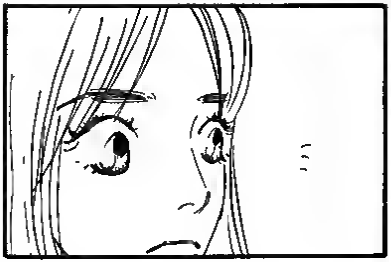
AHA, HA, HA, HA.
WHAT DOES SHE MEAN "GREAT EVENING"?
HIDE IS A CLEVER GIRL.
OH...
WAIT... I...

I HAVE A BOYFRIEND.

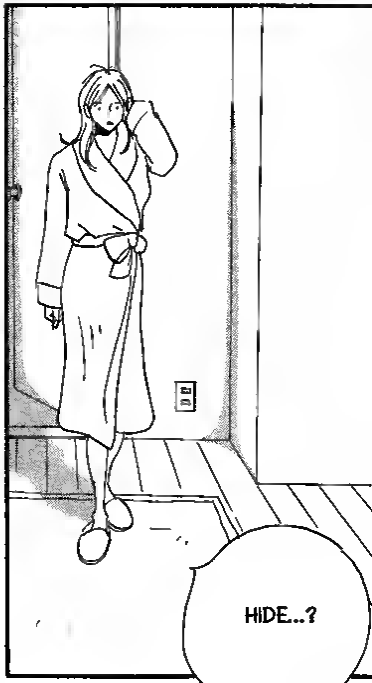
WE LIVE TOGETHER, AND WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MARRIAGE...

THAT'S ALL I CAN SAY...

I'LL NEVER MAKE LOVE THIS INTENSELY WITH MY BOYFRIEND EVER AGAIN.



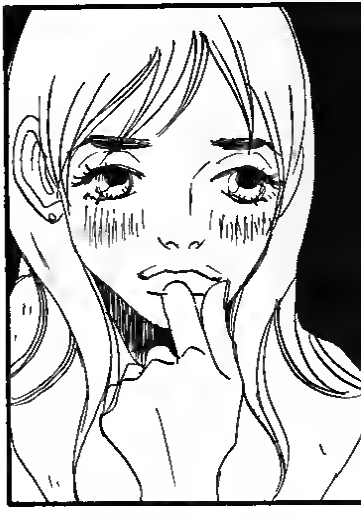
DEAR SAYUMI.
CHOCOLATE'S CONDITION
HAS SUDDENLY CHANGED
IM GOING HOME TODAY


HIDE...?

UM...
SAYUMI...
ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR VACATION WITH BAMBI. PLEASE DONT FORGET TO LOCK THE DOORS BEFORE YOU LEAVE
OH, MY GOSH, WHAT SHOULD I DO...?

I SHOULD
STOP WORRYING
ABOUT THE FUTURE
RIGHT NOW.

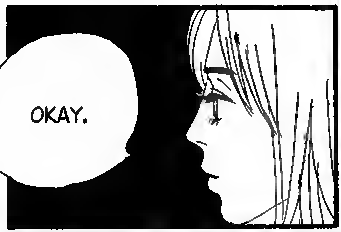
MY SUMMER
VACATION
HAS JUST
STARTED.



NORMAL LIFE HAS STARTED AGAIN, AND MORNING IS LIKE IT ALWAYS IS.
THAT NIGHT SEEMS LIKE A DREAM THAT HAPPENED SO LONG AGO.

SAYUMI.
I HAVE A MORNING MEETING, SO I'M IN A RUSH.

I'M GOING TO A FARE-WELL PARTY FOR YAMADA TONIGHT, SO I'LL BE HOME LATE.


OKAY.

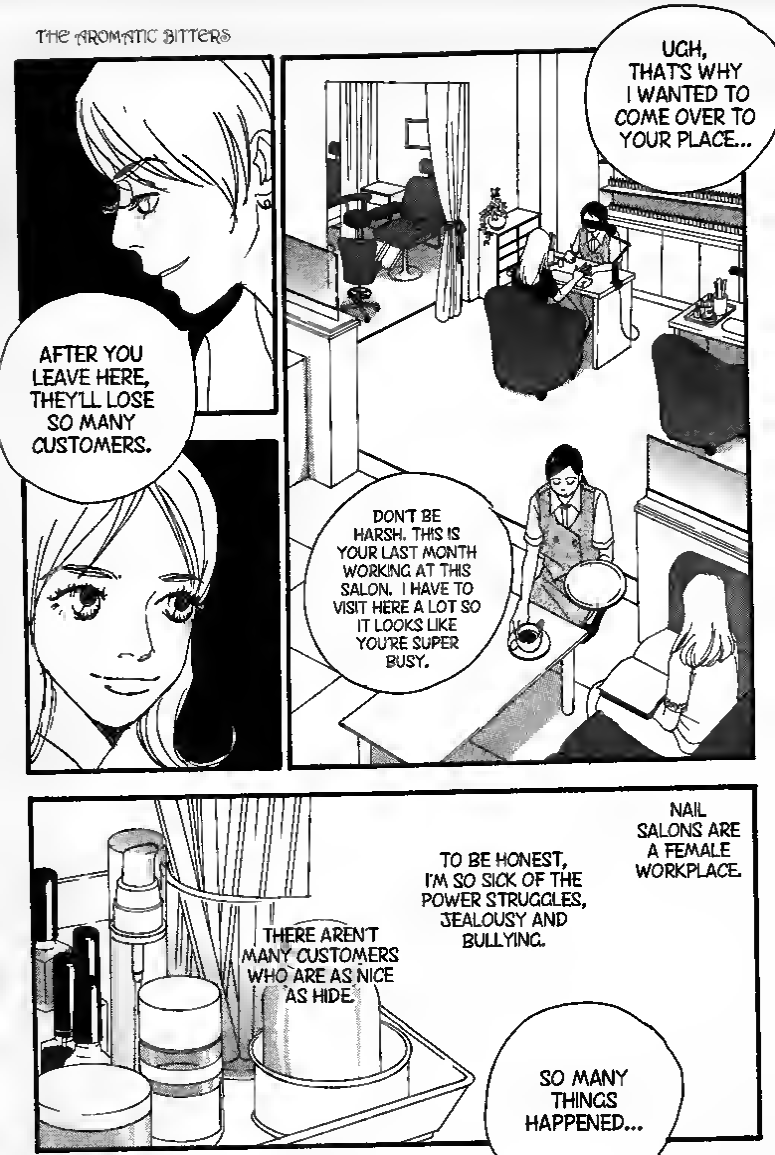
SORRY I COULDN'T GET UP FOR YOU.
OH...
THAT'S FINE.

HAVE A GOOD DAY.

LONG BEFORE WE GOT UP, WE STARTED TOUCHING EACH OTHER.
JUST TO FEEL EACH OTHER'S BODY... WE KISSED SO MANY TIMES...
THAT MORNING...
COME TO THINK OF IT, WE DON'T HAVE A MORNING KISS ANY-MORE.
I'M BECOMING MORE AND MORE HIS ROOMMATE.

I THOUGHT THAT A NEW LOVE WOULD BEGIN.

OH, YOU GUYS AREN'T GETTING TOGETHER?
SO, WHY DON'T YOU CALL HIM FIRST?
HIDE, YOU'RE TOO LOUD.
WELL, I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE I CAME BACK TO TOWN.

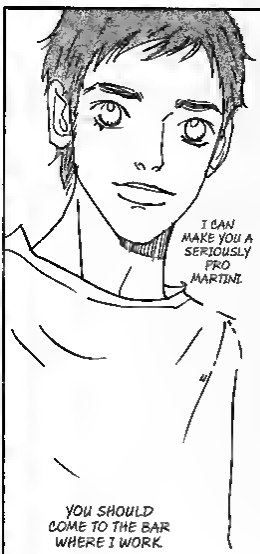

UGH, THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO COME OVER TO YOUR PLACE...
AFTER YOU LEAVE HERE, THEY'LL LOSE SO MANY CUSTOMERS.
DON'T BE HARSH. THIS IS YOUR LAST MONTH WORKING AT THIS SALON. I HAVE TO VISIT HERE A LOT SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SUPER BUSY.
NAIL SALONS ARE A FEMALE WORKPLACE.
TO BE HONEST, I'M SO SICK OF THE POWER STRUGGLES, JEALOUSY AND BULLYING.
THERE AREN'T MANY CUSTOMERS WHO ARE AS NICE AS HIDE.
SO MANY THINGS HAPPENED...

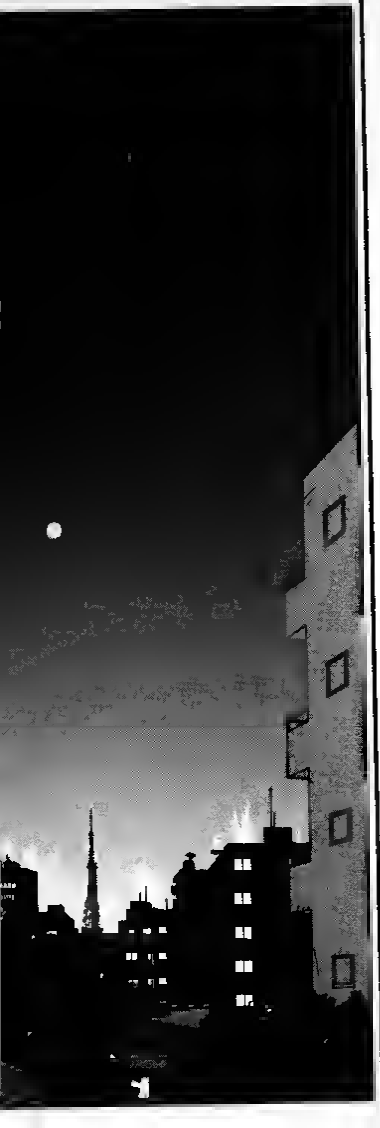
SURE, AND IF YOU DIDN'T MEET ME, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE MET THAT BAMBI BOY, EITHER.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING IN THIS SHOP IS THAT I MET YOU AND WE BECAME FRIENDS, HIDE.
NOTHING HAPPENS IF YOU JUST WAIT.
SAYUMI, YOU'RE OLDER THAN HE IS, SO YOU SHOULD MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALREADY.
OH, DUH! WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE BAR WHERE HE WORKS?!
IT'S EASIER THAN CALLING HIM, RIGHT?

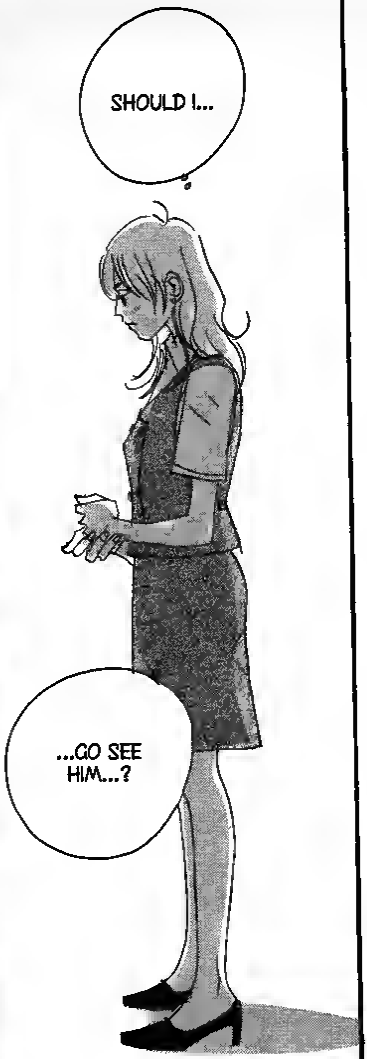
I DON'T EVEN HAVE THE GUTS TO TAKE CARE OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIROYUKI...
STOP THINKING SO MUCH.
I WOULD HAVE DONE IT ALREADY... IF IT HAD FELT LIKE THE BEGINNING OF LOVE.
SEE YOU.
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD HAVE ASKED YUSUKE HOW HE FELT ABOUT ME THAT NIGHT.
ANYWAY, I HAVE TO THINK ABOUT MY JOB.

EVEN WHEN I'M TRYING TO THINK OF WORK...

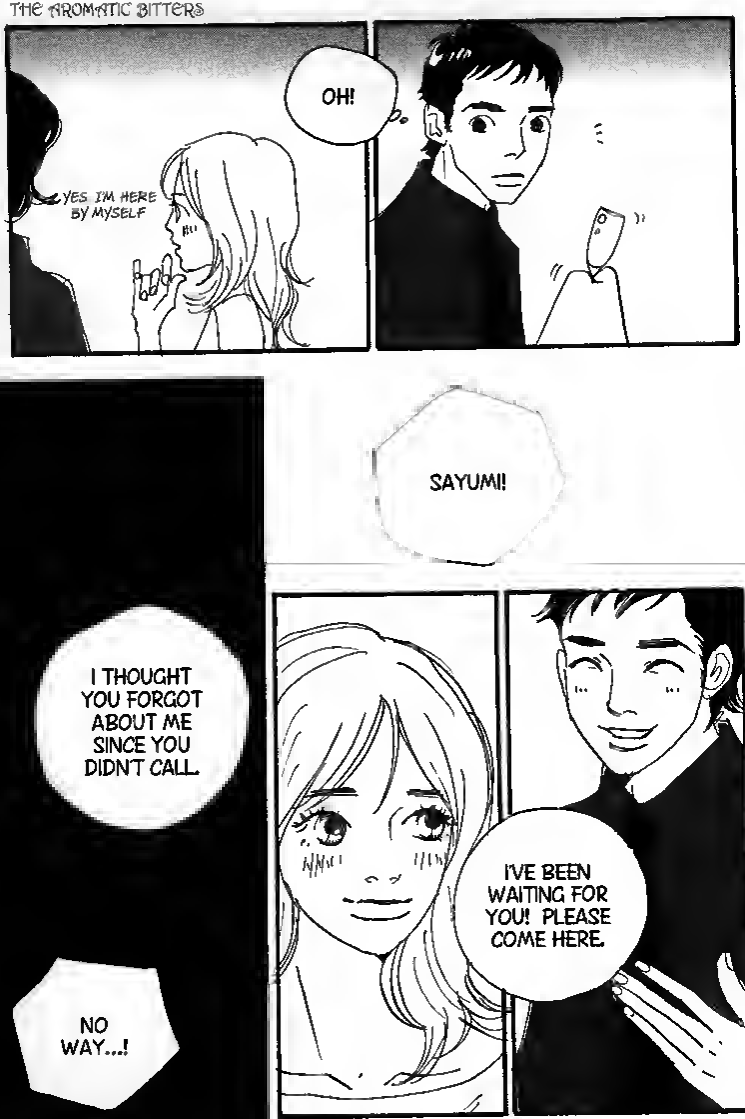
...I CAN'T KEEP MYSELF FROM REPEATING YUSUKE'S WORDS AGAIN AND AGAIN.





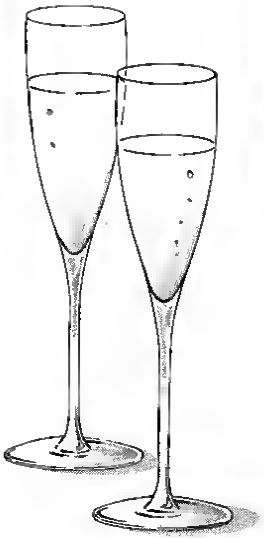

SHOULD I...
...GO SEE HIM...?

EH, AH...
ARE YOU ALONE?
MAY I HELP YOU?


OH!
YES IM HERE BY MYSELF
SAYUMI!
I THOUGHT YOU FORGOT ABOUT ME SINCE YOU DIDN'T CALL.
NO WAY...!
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU! PLEASE COME HERE.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHEN YOU WOULD COME, SO I EVEN WORKED ON MY DAY OFF.
OH NO!! YOU'RE KIDDING!!
YOU SAID YOU WOULD COME SEE ME HERE ONCE YOU GOT BACK TO TOKYO.
I'VE WAITED FOR YOU EVERY NIGHT.
I'M SO RELIEVED.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO IF I DIDN'T SEE YOU AGAIN.

SO HEY, LET'S CELEBRATE YOU AND ME MEETING AGAIN.



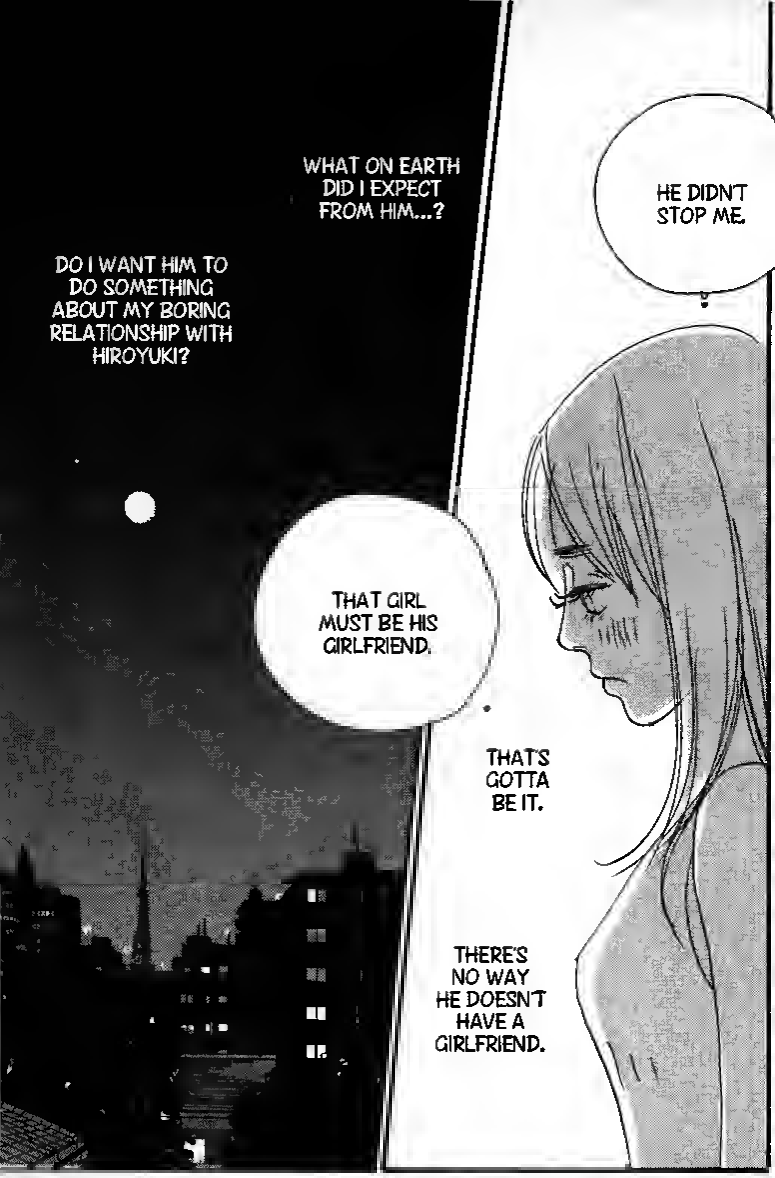
SHOULD I BE HAPPY?

IS IT RIGHT TO ASSUME THAT WE HAVE THE SAME FEELINGS?

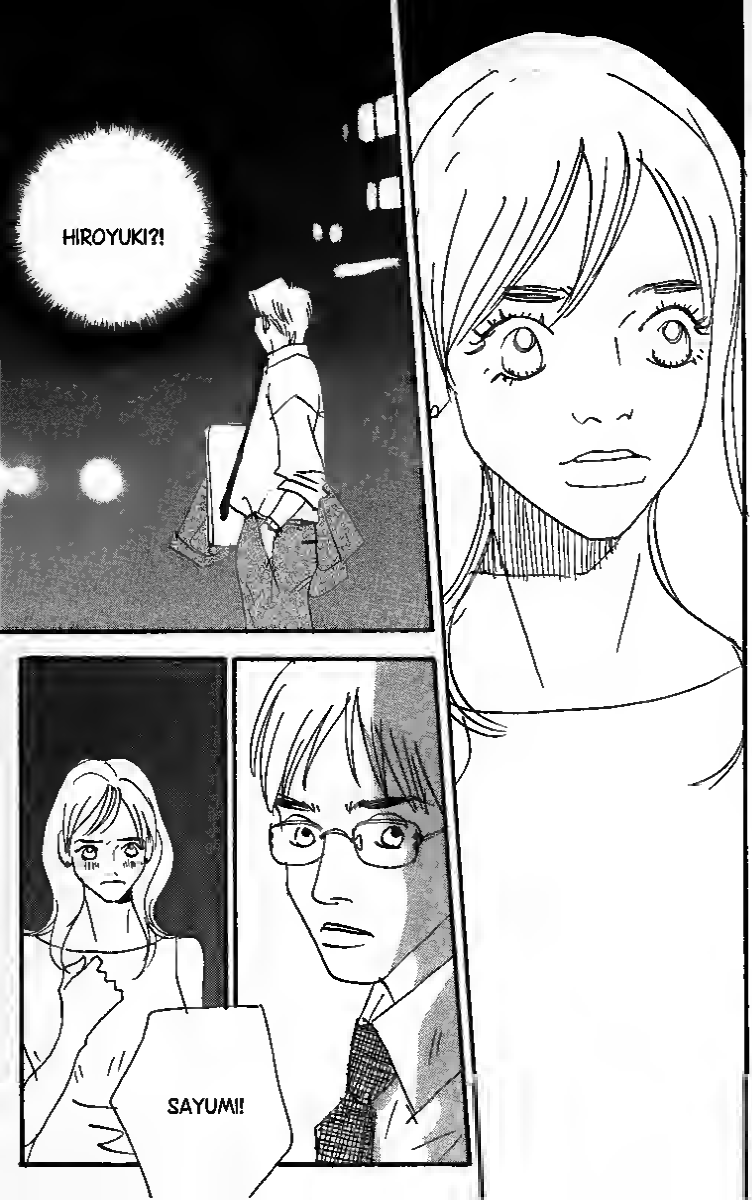
YU.
MAY I HELP YOU?
SURE.
GIVE ME A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE. I'LL BE AT MY USUAL TABLE.

WELL...
SAYUMI, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DRINK?
HOW ABOUT THAT MARTINI I PROMISED YOU?
I'VE GOT TO GO AFTER I HAVE THE DRINK...
SURE...
YU...?

.....
I HAVE WORK TOMORROW, SO I CAN'T GET HOME LATE.
IF I LEAVE NOW, I CAN STILL CATCH THE LAST TRAIN.
I SEE. WELL, THEN, WE SHOULD GET TOGETHER ANOTHER TIME.
THANK YOU FOR TONIGHT.
I'M SO GLAD YOU CAME.
SEE YOU NEXT TIME.

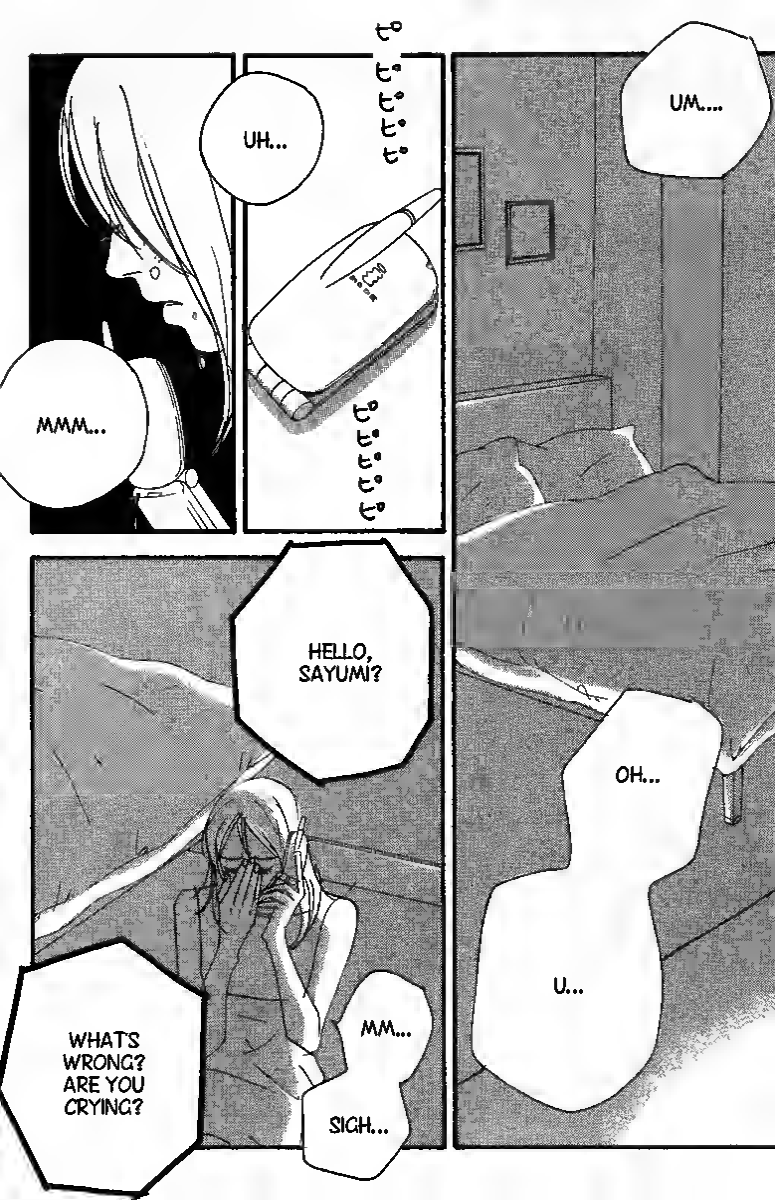

HE DIDN'T STOP ME.
WHAT ON EARTH DID I EXPECT FROM HIM...?
DO I WANT HIM TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT MY BORING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIROYUKI?
THAT GIRL MUST BE HIS GIRLFRIEND.
THAT'S GOTTA BE IT.
THERE'S NO WAY HE DOESN'T HAVE A GIRLFRIEND.

OH.
I'VE GOT TO GO.
GOOD NIGHT.


HIROYUKI?!
SAYUMI!

NO!
DON'T TOUCH ME.
WHAT WAS THAT?
WHAT WERE YOU DOING WITH THAT GIRL?
WHAT? YOU'RE MISTAKEN. LET'S GO INSIDE. YOU DON'T WANNA MAKE NOISE IN THIS NEIGHBOR-HOOD.
SAYUMI...
GET OFF ME!
CALM DOWN!!

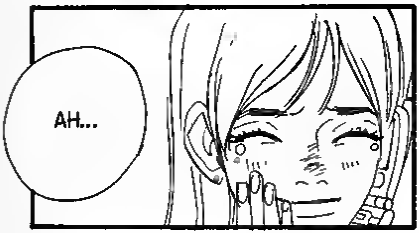
.....
I'M SORRY...
CHILL OUT BY YOURSELF...
I'LL STAY AT A HOTEL FOR A WHILE.


UM....
OH...
U...
HELLO, SAYUMI?
MM...
SIGH...
WHAT'S WRONG? ARE YOU CRYING?
UH...
MMM...

I...

I'M ALL RIGHT.

I WAS AFRAID THAT YOU'D THINK I WAS LAME IF I WAS TOO PERSISTENT.

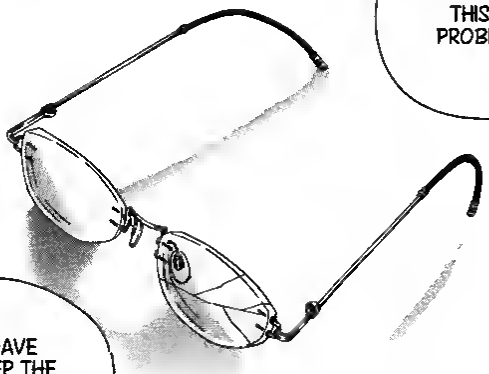


FROM THE MOMENT I HUNG UP THE PHONE, HIROYUKI WAS NO LONGER ON MY MIND.

LAST NIGHT, MY GIRLFRIEND HIT ME.

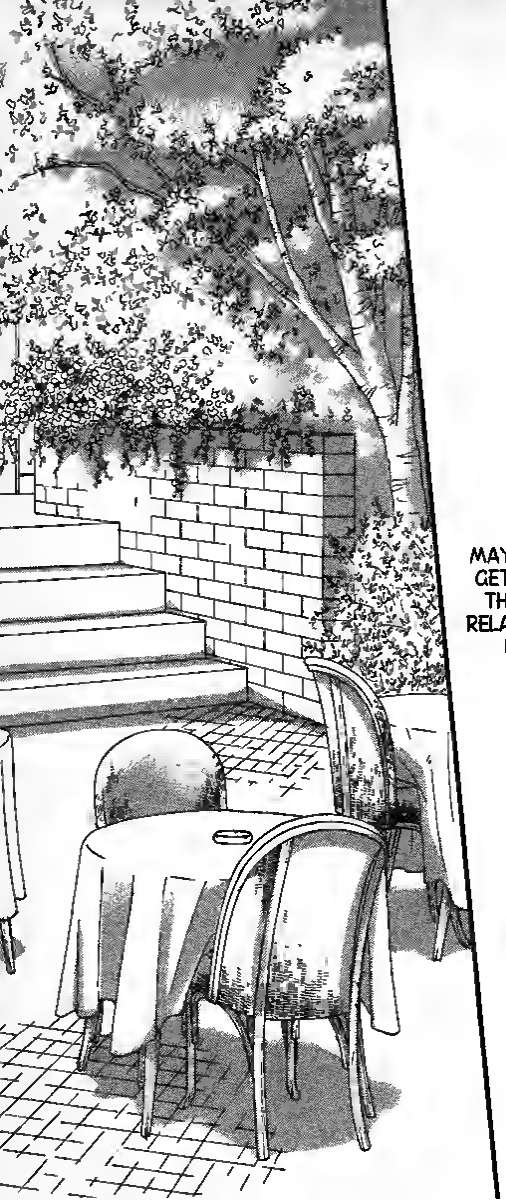
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I WAS HIT BY A WOMAN. I'M HURT FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

SIR, THIS IS A PROBLEM...

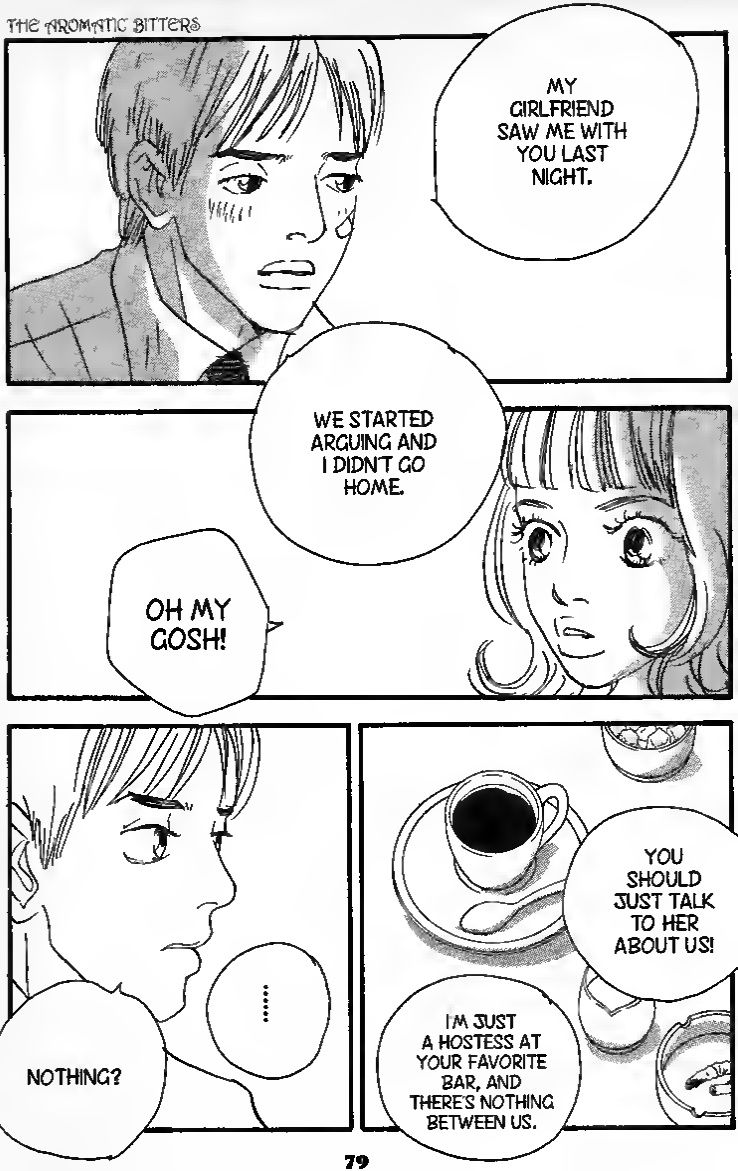


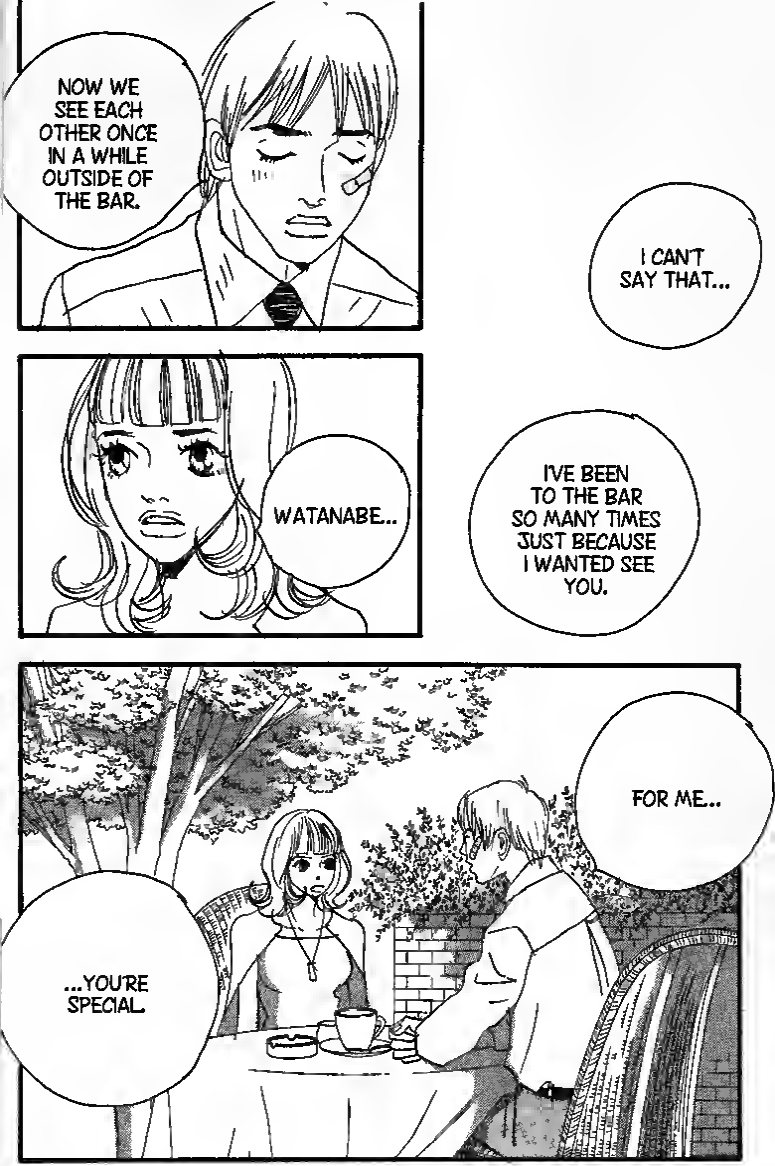
I'LL HAVE TO KEEP THE GLASSES ALL DAY TO REPLACE A LENS AND REPAIR THE FRAME.

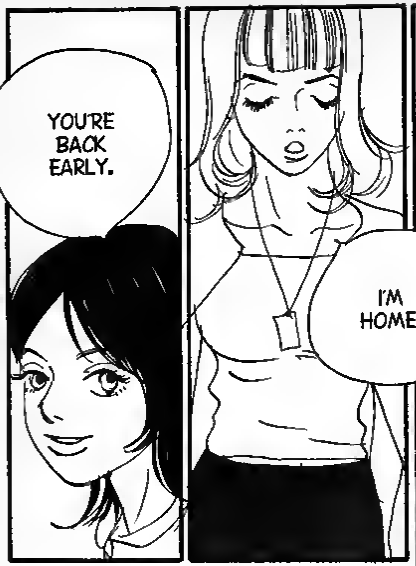
I DO THIS KINDA THING QUITE OFTEN.
HA, HA, HA.
WELL...
I ACCIDENTALLY STEPPED ON THEM.
I SEE.
HOW EMBARRASSING THAT THE REPAIRMAN LOOKED AT ME LIKE HE KNEW IT WAS A FIGHT.
MAYBE I SHOULD TAKE THE DAY OFF FROM WORK...
I HAVE SO MANY VACATION DAYS THAT I HAVEN'T USED YET.
BESIDES, I CAN'T GET ANY WORK DONE WITH-OUT MY GLASSES.

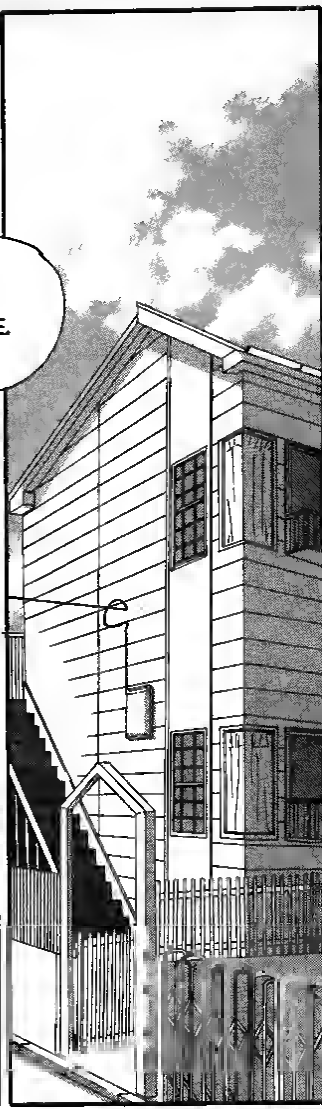

I'M ABSOLUTELY PATHETIC.
BUT, MAYBE I CAN GET OUT OF THIS DULL RELATIONSHIP NOW.

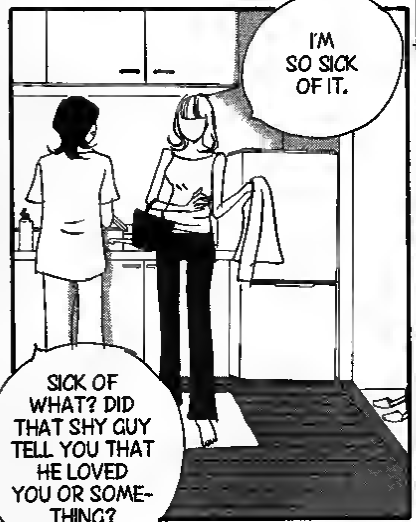
WHAT'S UP, WATANABE?
WHAT HAPPENED TO WORK TODAY?
I TOOK THE DAY OFF.
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE, ISN'T THERE? HOW'D YOU GET THAT SCRATCH?
.....
YOU CAN TELL ME.
I WANT TO ENJOY THIS BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY WITH YOU, AYUMI.
YOU'RE RIGHT!


MY GIRLFRIEND SAW ME WITH YOU LAST NIGHT.
WE STARTED ARGUING AND I DIDN'T GO HOME.
OH MY GOSH!
NOTHING?
.....
I'M JUST A HOSTESS AT YOUR FAVORITE BAR, AND THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN US.
YOU SHOULD JUST TALK TO HER ABOUT US!

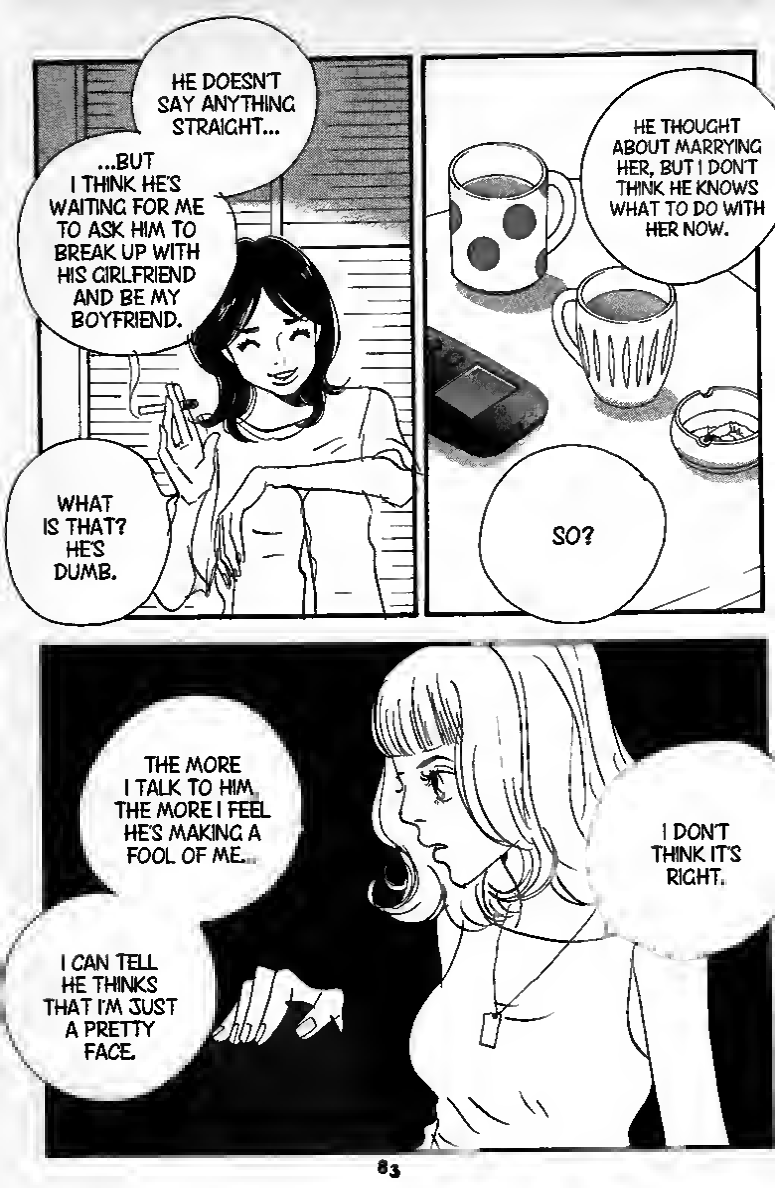

NOW WE SEE EACH OTHER ONCE IN A WHILE OUTSIDE OF THE BAR.
I CAN'T SAY THAT...
WATANABE...
I'VE BEEN TO THE BAR SO MANY TIMES JUST BECAUSE I WANTED SEE YOU.
FOR ME...
...YOU'RE SPECIAL.


YOU'RE BACK EARLY.
I'M HOME.

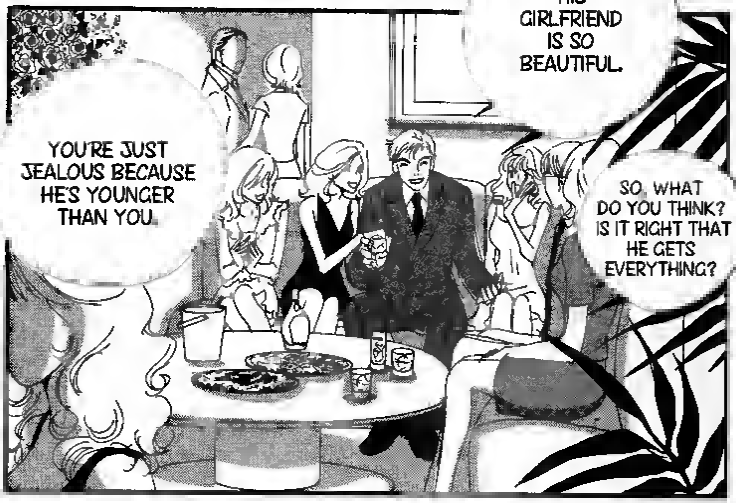


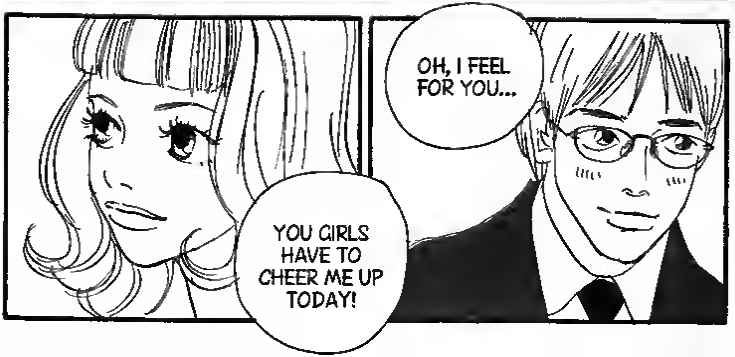

I'M SO SICK OF IT.
SICK OF WHAT? DID THAT SHY GUY TELL YOU THAT HE LOVED YOU OR SOMETHING?

I TOLD YOU NOT TO BE SO NICE TO WATANABE.
I KNOW...
I KNEW IT!
HOW DO YOU KNOW EVERY-THING?
I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE HAD FEELINGS FOR ME.
BUT WHENEVER HE CAME TO THE BAR, HE TALKED ABOUT HIS GIRLFRIEND.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS.
WHAT?
DID HE ASK YOU TO BE HIS GIRLFRIEND?

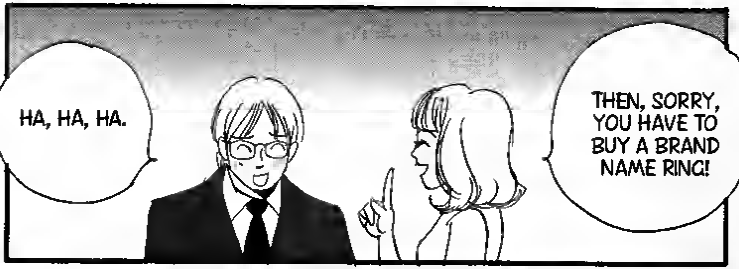

HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING STRAIGHT...
...BUT I THINK HE'S WAITING FOR ME TO ASK HIM TO BREAK UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND AND BE MY BOYFRIEND.
WHAT IS THAT? HE'S DUMB.
HE THOUGHT ABOUT MARRYING HER, BUT I DON'T THINK HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH HER NOW.
SO?
THE MORE I TALK TO HIM, THE MORE I FEEL HE'S MAKING A FOOL OF ME...
I CAN TELL HE THINKS THAT I'M JUST A PRETTY FACE.
I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT.

WHEN HE CAME TO THE BAR FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE HAD SO MANY BROCHURES FOR ENGAGEMENT RINGS.


HIS GIRLFRIEND IS SO BEAUTIFUL.
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK? IS IT RIGHT THAT HE GETS EVERYTHING?
YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE HE'S YOUNGER THAN YOU.



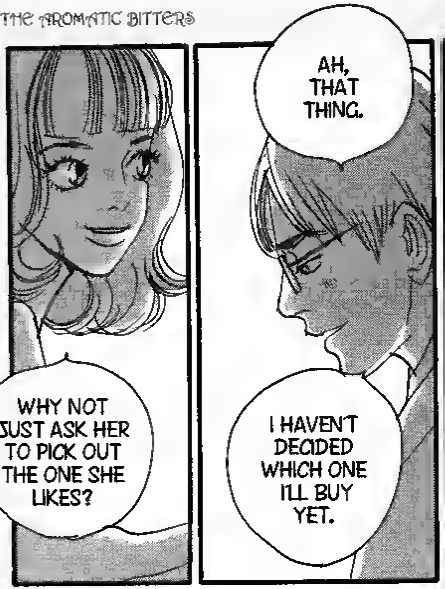
I'M NOT BUYING YET. AND ACTUALLY, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHICH ONE IS THE BEST.
THEY ALL LOOK SAME TO ME.
HMM.
SO...
HAVE YOU DECIDED?
WHAT?
THANKS FOR THE DRINK
WHICH RING ARE YOU GONNA BUY FOR HER?
I GUESS I SHOULD GET A BRAND NAME, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHAT GIRLS WANT. TIFFANY AND CARTIER ARE A GIRL'S DREAM.
BUT FOR ME, IF I WAS SO IN LOVE AND EXCITED TO BE WITH HIM, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE A TOY RING FROM A FESTIVAL STREET VENDER.



SINCE THEN, WATANABE COMES TO THE BAR REGULARLY.

WHEN HE WAS THERE, HE REQUESTED THAT I BE HIS SERVER.

HE ALSO BROUGHT ME FLOWERS ALL OF THE TIME.



SINCE THEN, HE STOPPED TALKING ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT RING.

I DON'T KNOW IF HE BOUGHT IT OR NOT.
I TOTALLY FORGOT ABOUT IT BECAUSE I REALLY DIDN'T CARE.

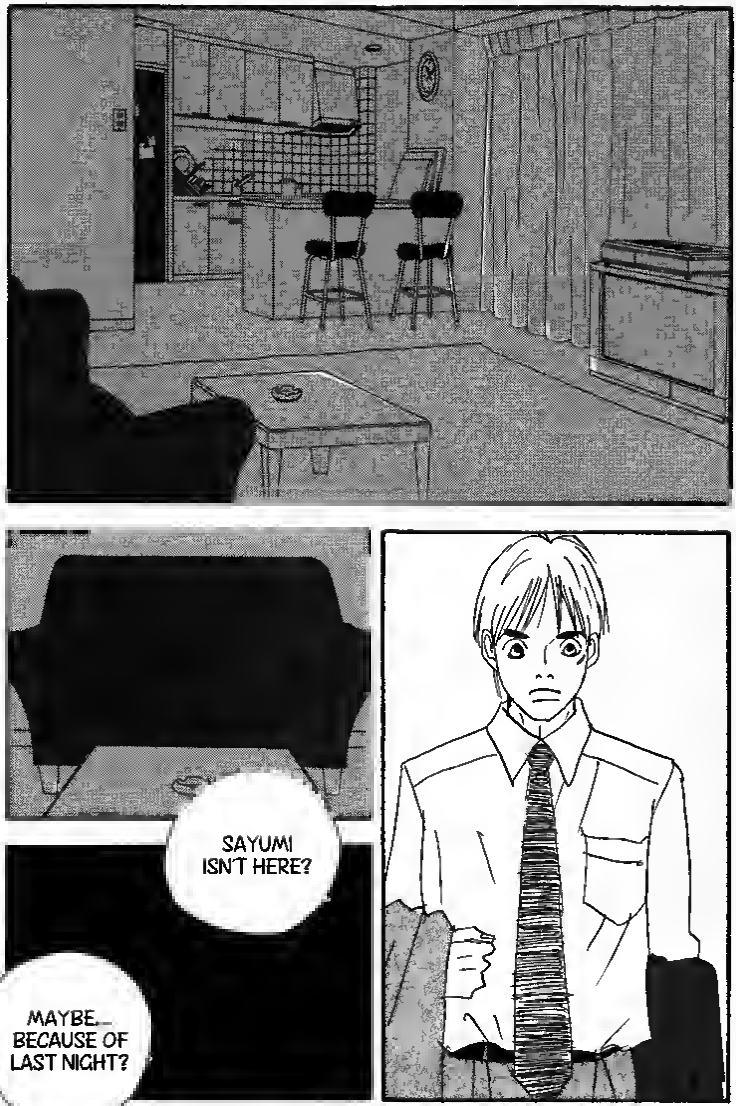
I'M SO FLATTERED BY YOUR FEELINGS.

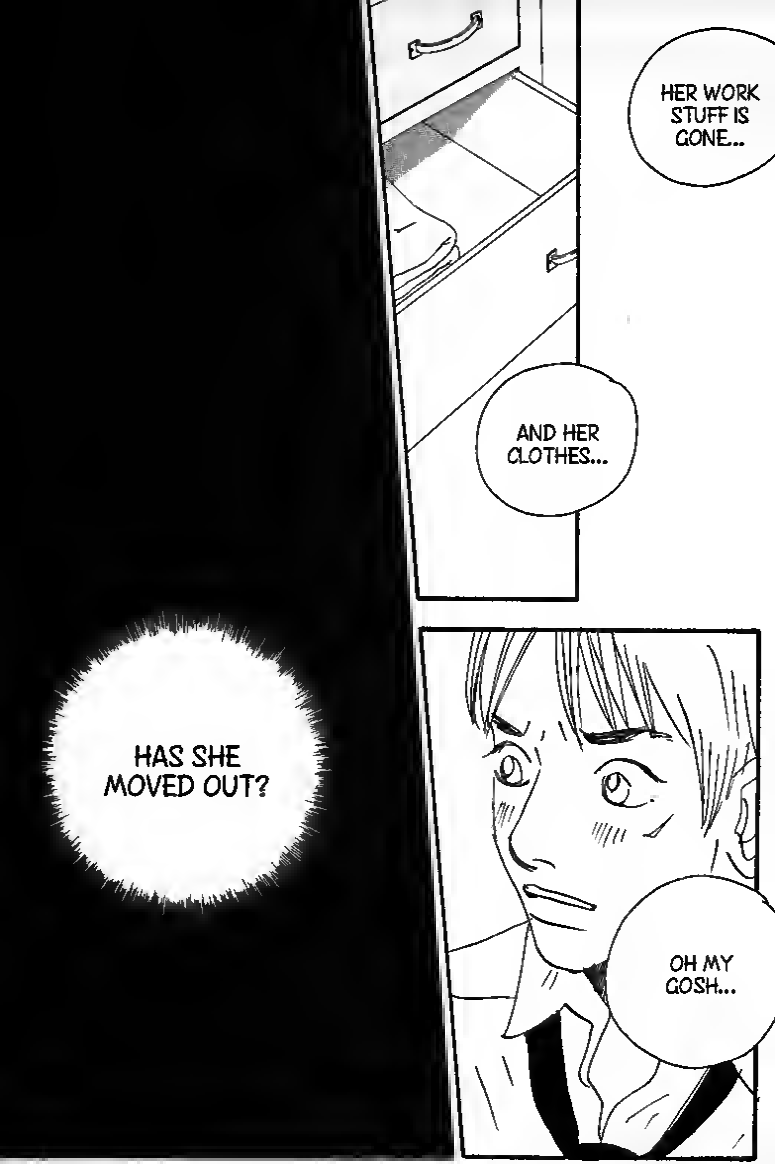
BUT YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER CUSTOMER TO ME

THAT'S ALL.

IF IT'S A LIE TO KISS SO SOFTLY AND GENTLY...
...THERE WOULD BE NO TRUTH IN THE WORLD.
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE.
SHE'S PROBABLY LYING TO ME.
HOW CAN SHE EXPLAIN THE KISS WE HAD LAST NIGHT BEFORE I LEFT.

I SHOULD FINISH THIS...
I SHOULD BREAK UP WITH SAYUMI AND GET TOGETHER WITH AYUMI.


SAYUMI ISN'T HERE?
MAYBE... BECAUSE OF LAST NIGHT?


HER WORK STUFF IS GONE...
AND HER CLOTHES...
HAS SHE MOVED OUT?
OH MY GOSH...

プルルルル
プルルルル
プルルルル
プルルルル
プルルル
HELLO...
HELLO?
AYUMI?
UM...? WATANABE?
AYUMI, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHAT HAPPENED?

SAYUMI'S GONE. SHE LEFT OUR APARTMENT.
SHE...
I...I WAS GOING TO BREAK UP WITH HER AND THOUGHT THAT I NEEDED TO TALK TO HER... SO, I CAME BACK...

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY...
WATANABE, WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

THAT'S GREAT.
SHE LEFT BEFORE YOU HAD TO DEAL WITH HER.

YOU WANT ME TO SAY 'POOR BOY! COME TO MY PLACE!'
I TOLD YOU MY FEELINGS FOR YOU THIS AFTERNOON.
YOU'RE JUST ONE OF MY CUSTOMERS.
DO YOU THINK I'M A CREEP OR SOMETHING?
YOU'RE MISTAKEN.

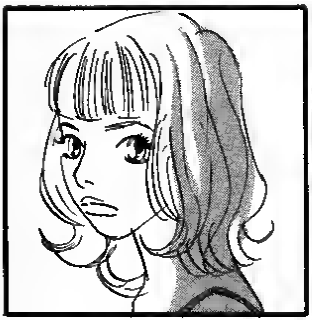
NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY TO ME, IT'S NOT GONNA BE MORE THAN THAT.
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, DON'T COME TO THE BAR ANYMORE.
BZZZ.
BZZZ.
BZZZ.

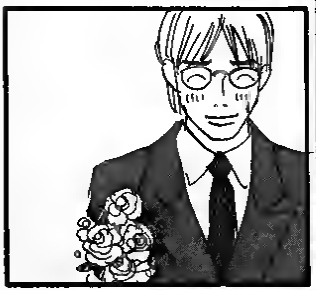
I THOUGHT I WOULD BREAK UP WITH YOU AND START A NEW LOVE.
IT ENDED BEFORE I DECIDED TO DO IT.
SAYUMI...
I'M SO MISERABLE NOW...
WHERE ON EARTH ARE YOU NOW?
YOU DON'T EVEN ANSWER YOUR CELL PHONE...

WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED TO ME?

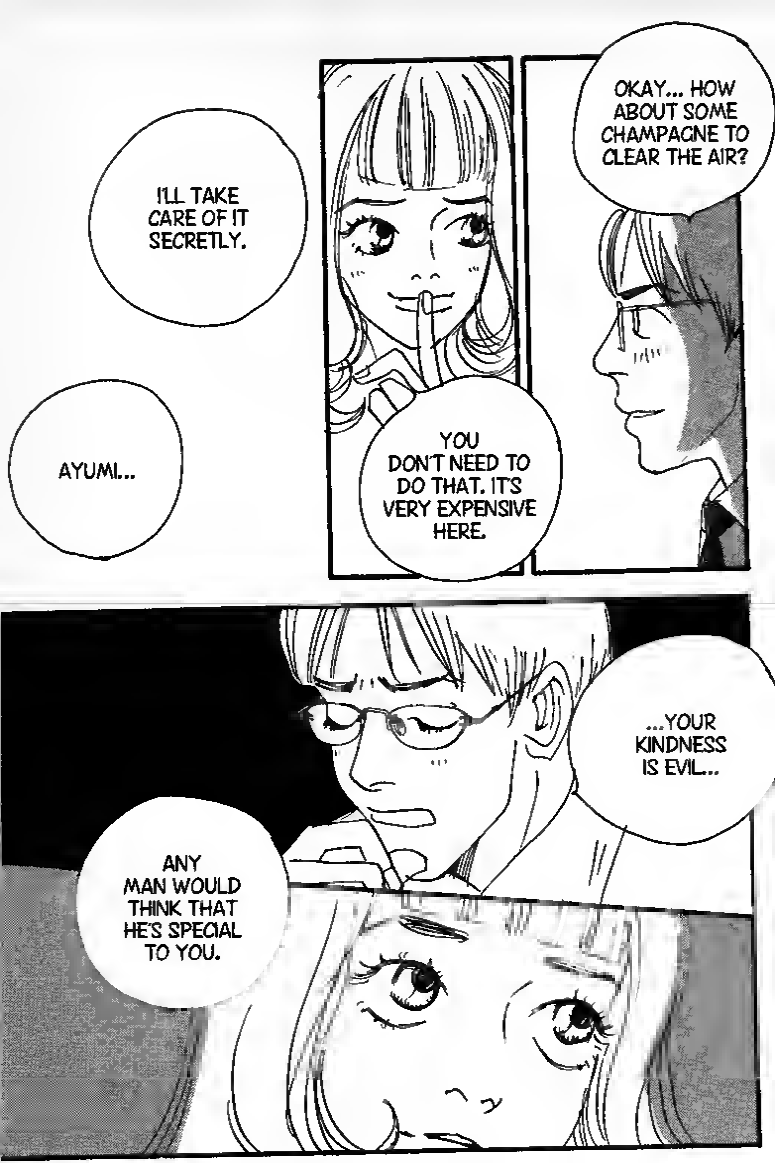
DO I REALLY LIKE AYUMI?

DO I REALLY WANT TO BREAK UP WITH SAYUMI?



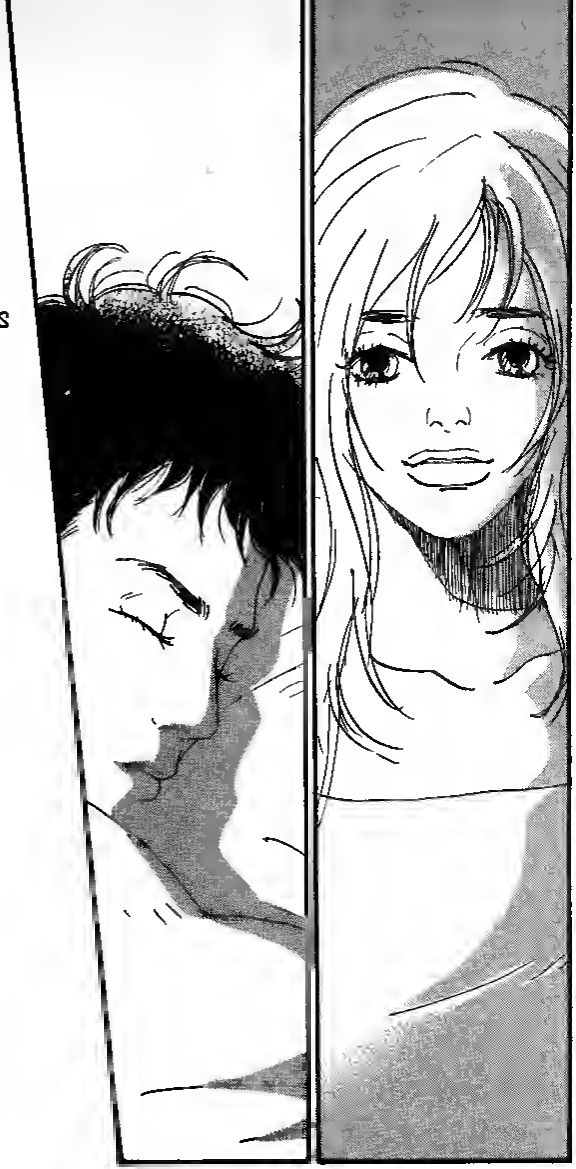


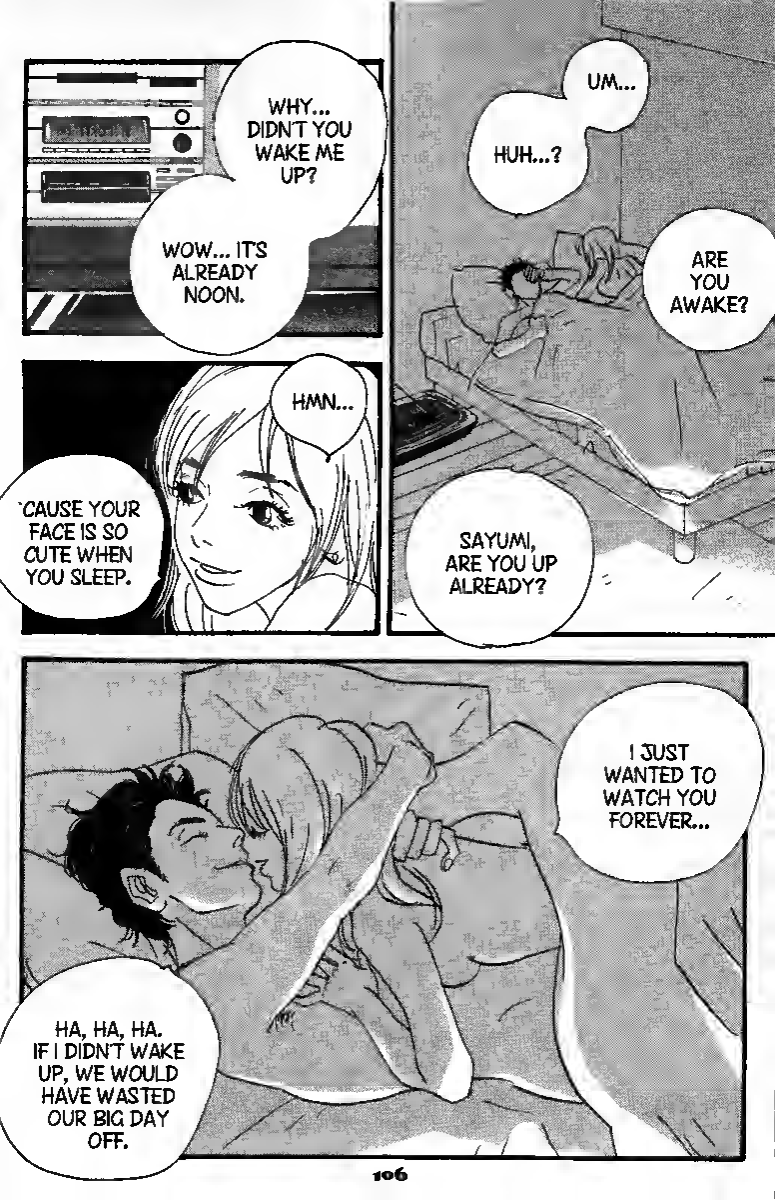
STILL, I DO KNOW THAT I HATE THE THOUGHT OF NEVER SEEING YOU AGAIN.
I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THE OTHER DAY...
ROYAL
WATANABE...
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT I WANT TO DO. BUT I JUST DON'T KNOW...
HERE YOU HAVE A PLACE TO DRINK AND HAVE FUN. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?
SO, WHY DON'T WE FORGET ABOUT IT?


I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT SECRETLY.
OKAY... HOW ABOUT SOME CHAMPAGNE TO CLEAR THE AIR?
AYUMI...
YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THAT. IT'S VERY EXPENSIVE HERE.
...YOUR KINDNESS IS EVIL...
ANY MAN WOULD THINK THAT HE'S SPECIAL TO YOU.

AND I STILL CAN'T GIVE UP AYUMI... OR SAYUMI.
STOP MAKING A FACE LIKE THAT.
I'M SO PATHETIC AND STUPID.
WHY DON'T WE HAVE A TOAST?

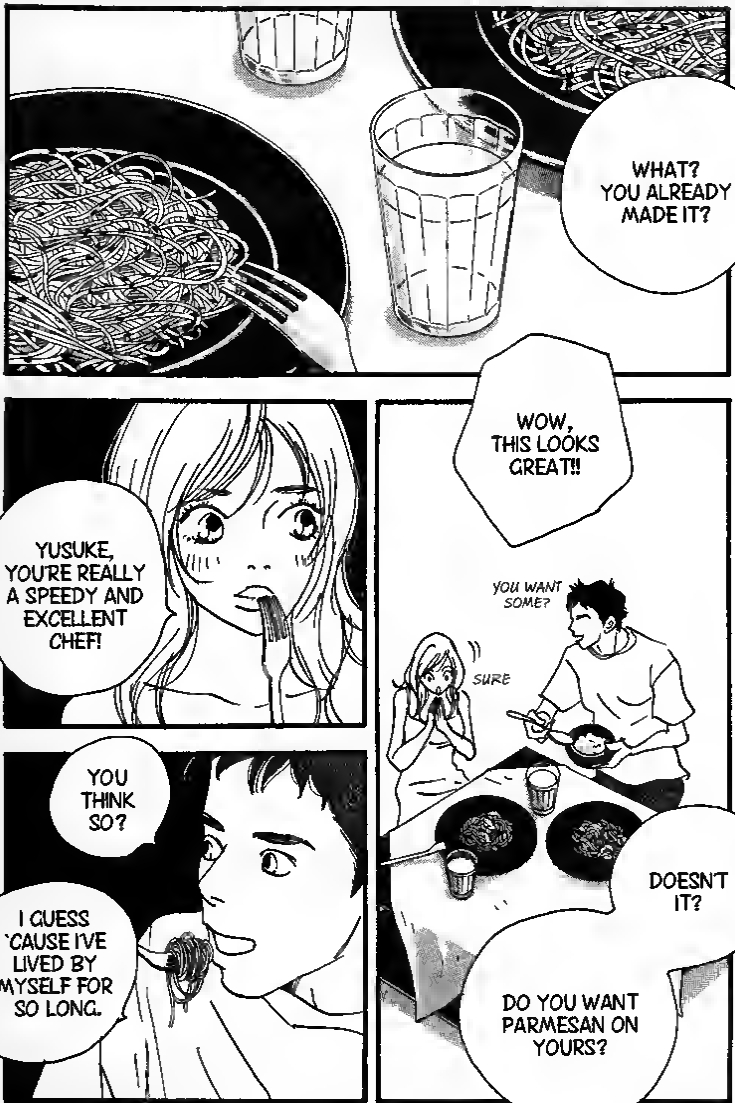
The Aromatic Rose
act 4

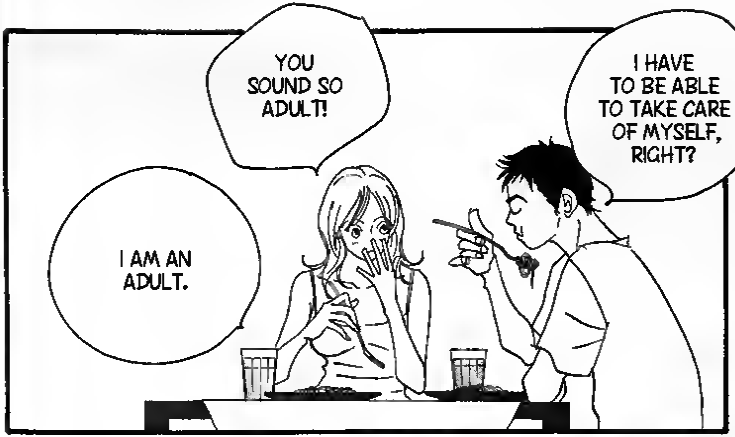

WHEN I WOKE UP, YUSUKE WAS NEXT TO ME.
I WONDER IF I'M STILL DREAMING.

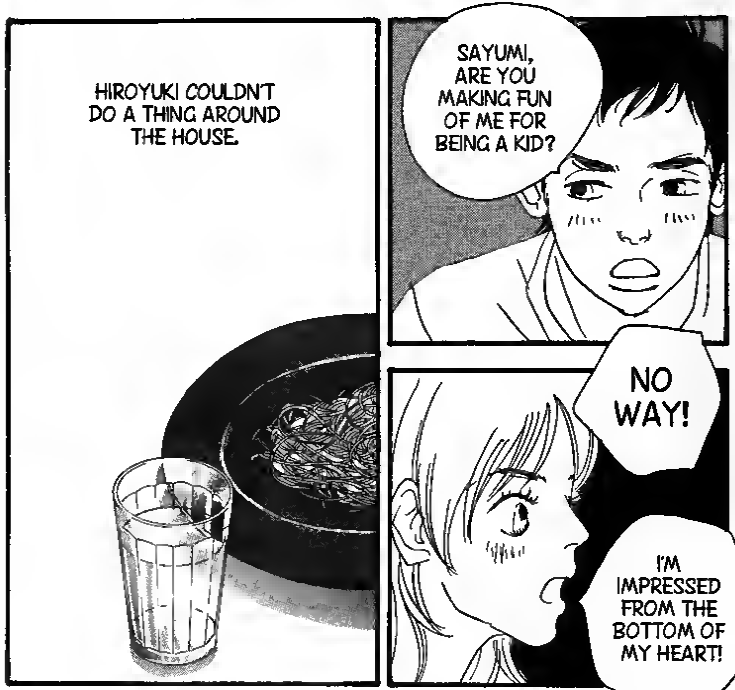

WHY... DIDN'T YOU WAKE ME UP?
WOW... IT'S ALREADY NOON.
UM...
HUH...?
ARE YOU AWAKE?
SAYUMI, ARE YOU UP ALREADY?
HMN...
'CAUSE YOUR FACE IS SO CUTE WHEN YOU SLEEP.
I JUST WANTED TO WATCH YOU FOREVER...
HA, HA, HA. IF I DIDN'T WAKE UP, WE WOULD HAVE WASTED OUR BIG DAY OFF.

I'M HUNGRY...
ARM...
WRIST...
YUSUKE'S NECK-LINE...
HIS BACK...
I SHOULD FIX PASTA OR SOMETHING.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HAD THIS KIND OF FEELING.
I'M ATTRACTED TO EVERY INCH OF HIM.
IT'S REALLY DELICIOUS...
HEY, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
THIS IS MY FAVORITE BASIL PASTA LATELY.
YEAH, I'M LISTENING TO YOU!

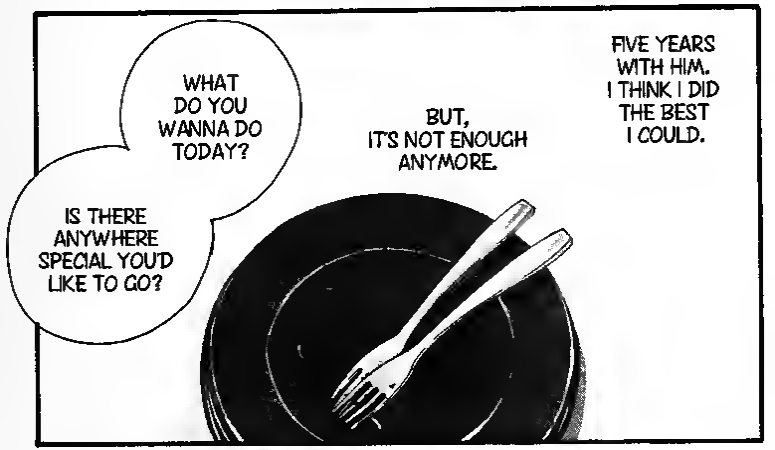
YUSUKE.
I LIKE YOU SO MUCH.
THIS FEELS LIKE LOVE. I HAVEN'T FELT THIS IN SO LONG.
I LIKE YOU, TOO.

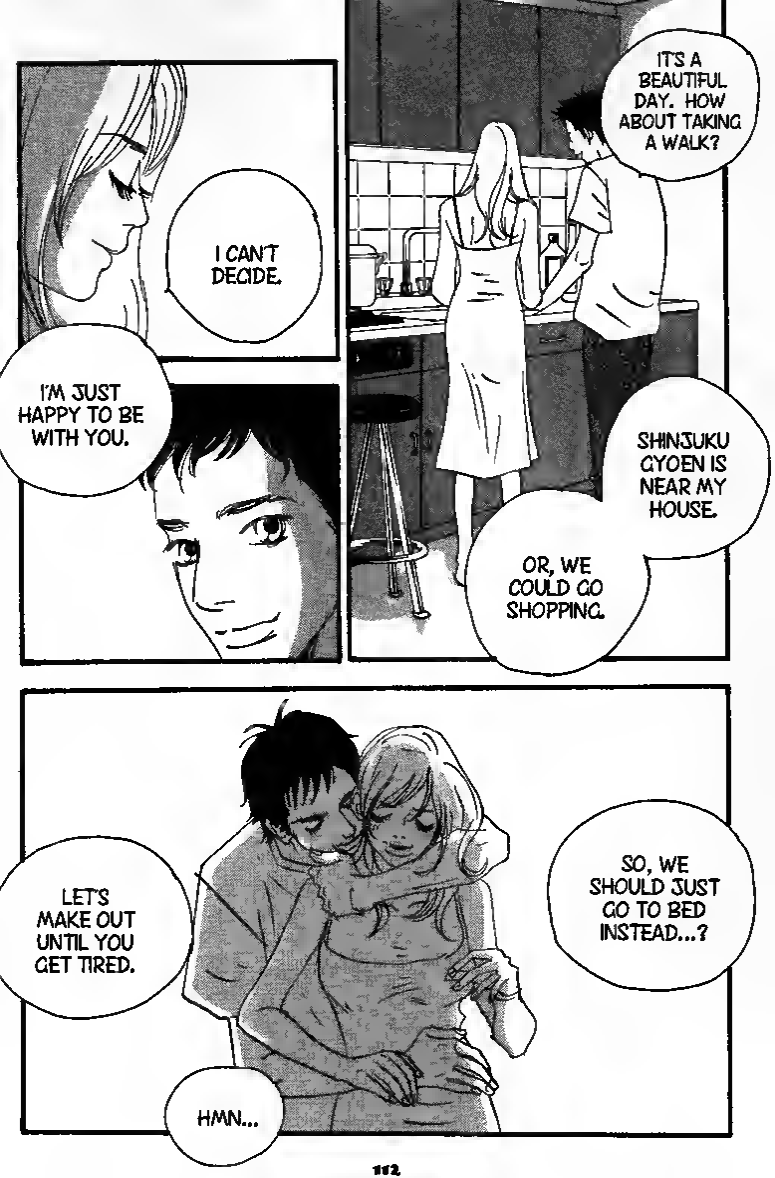

WHAT? YOU ALREADY MADE IT?
WOW, THIS LOOKS GREAT!!
YOU WANT SOME?
SURE
DOESN'T IT?
DO YOU WANT PARMESAN ON YOURS?
YUSUKE, YOU'RE REALLY A SPEEDY AND EXCELLENT CHEF!
YOU THINK SO?
I GUESS 'CAUSE I'VE LIVED BY MYSELF FOR SO LONG.


YOU SOUND SO ADULT!
I HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF, RIGHT?
I AM AN ADULT.

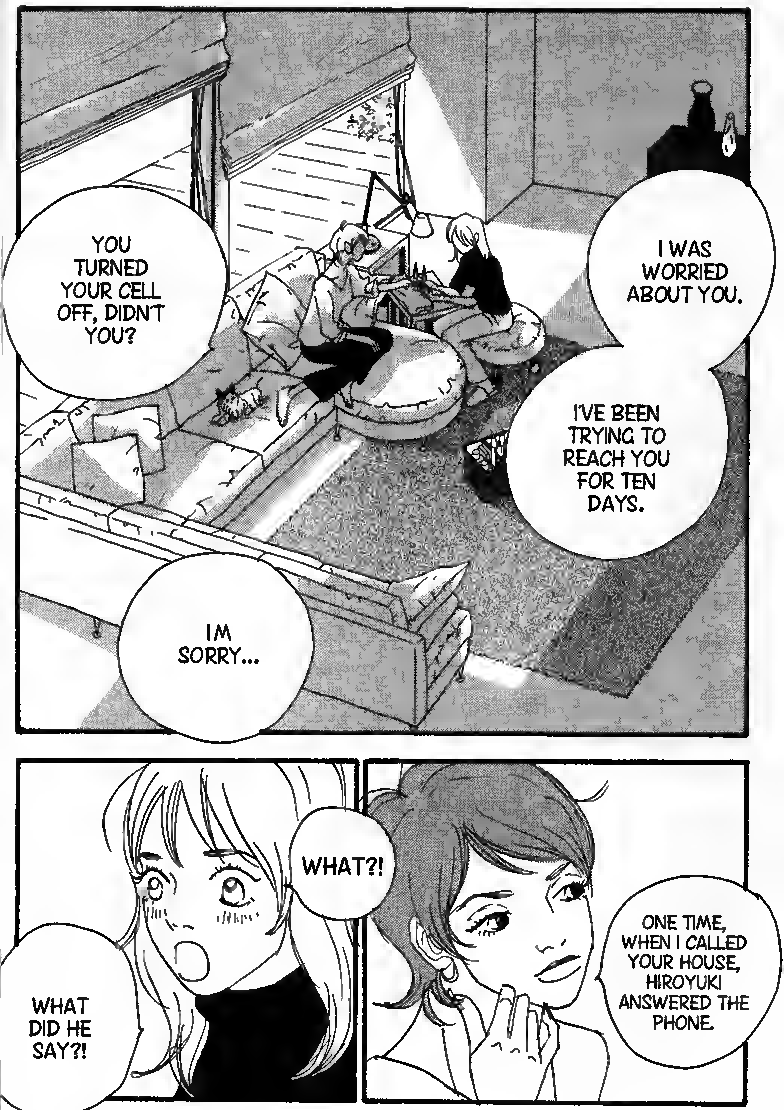

HIROYUKI COULDN'T DO A THING AROUND THE HOUSE.
SAYUMI, ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME FOR BEING A KID?
NO WAY!
I'M IMPRESSED FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!

HE ALWAYS COMPARED ME TO HIS MOTHER, WHO WAS A HOUSEWIFE AND GOOD COOK.
YET HE WAS VERY PICKY ABOUT EVERYTHING. HE WOULDN'T EVEN EAT BREAKFAST IF IT WASN'T JAPANESE STYLE.
HE ASKED ME FOR THE SAME THING.


WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO TODAY?
IS THERE ANYWHERE SPECIAL YOU'D LIKE TO GO?
BUT, IT'S NOT ENOUGH ANYMORE.
FIVE YEARS WITH HIM. I THINK I DID THE BEST I COULD.


I CAN'T DECIDE.
I'M JUST HAPPY TO BE WITH YOU.
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY. HOW ABOUT TAKING A WALK?
SHINJUKU GYOEN IS NEAR MY HOUSE.
OR, WE COULD GO SHOPPING.
LET'S MAKE OUT UNTIL YOU GET TIRED.
HMN...
SO, WE SHOULD JUST GO TO BED INSTEAD...?

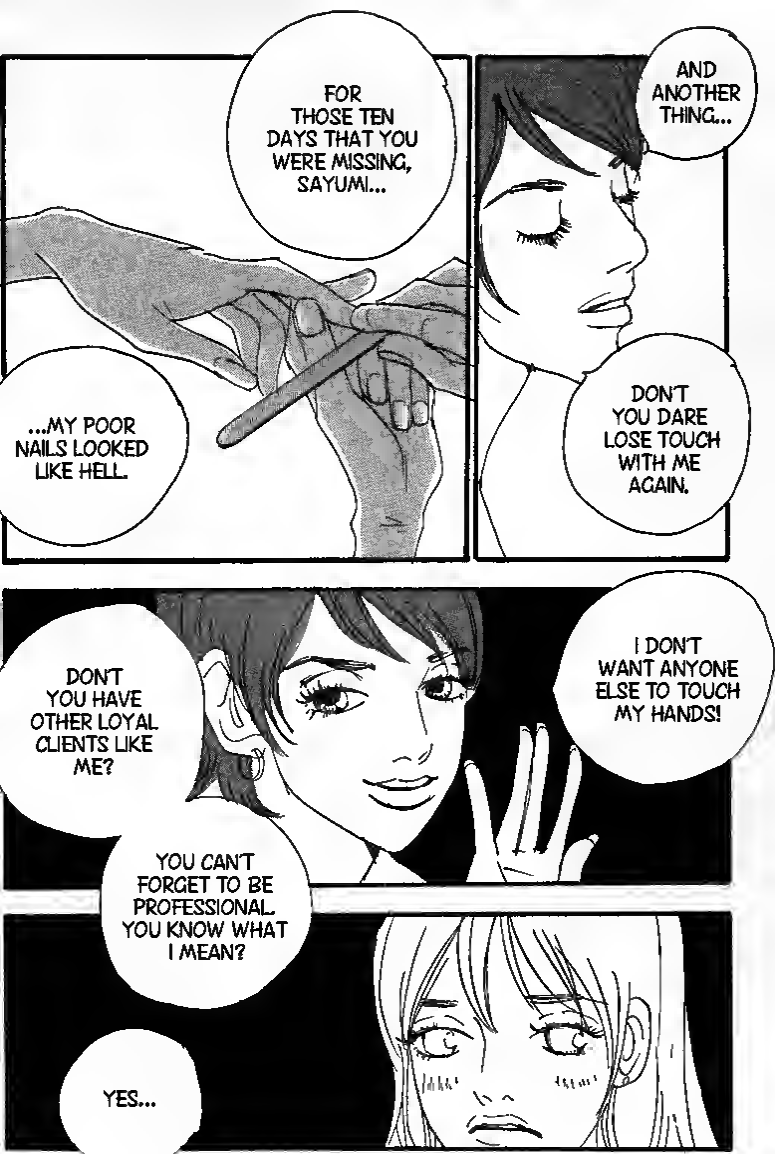
I MUST BE RUNNING AWAY FROM REALITY TO THINK LIKE THIS.
I WANT THIS AFTERNOON TO LAST FOREVER.


I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU FOR TEN DAYS.
YOU TURNED YOUR CELL OFF, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M SORRY...
ONE TIME, WHEN I CALLED YOUR HOUSE, HIROYUKI ANSWERED THE PHONE.
WHAT?!
WHAT DID HE SAY?!

ISN'T IT A GOOD IDEA TO TELL HIM WHAT'S GOING ON?
HE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE.
HE SOUNDED SO DEPRESSED...
.....
WHAT?
EVEN FOR YUSUKE, IT'S NOT COOL TO JUST CUT HIM OFF WITHOUT AN EXPLANATION.
ACTUALLY...
YOU HAVEN'T TOLD YUSUKE THAT YOU HAD A LIVE-IN BOYFRIEND?!
THAT'S RIGHT.

WHY HAVEN'T YOU FOUND OUT IF YUSUKE HAS A GIRLFRIEND?
WHY?!
BECAUSE...
...YUSUKE DOESN'T ASK ME ANYTHING.
I KINDA MISSED A CHANCE TO TELL HIM ABOUT HIROYUKI.
I'M JUST HAPPY TO BE WITH HIM.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE RIGHT NOW.

BESIDES THAT, I DON'T SEE ANY CLUES THAT HE HAS A GIRL.
THERE'S NO PHONE CALLS FROM ANY GIRLS...
YOU'RE SO NAÏVE, SAYUMI.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IF YOU DON'T WANNA FINISH THE THING WITH YUSUKE AS A LOVE AFFAIR, YOU SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR...
...TO YUSUKE AS WELL AS HIROYUKI.


FOR THOSE TEN DAYS THAT YOU WERE MISSING, SAYUMI...
...MY POOR NAILS LOOKED LIKE HELL.
AND ANOTHER THING...
DON'T YOU DARE LOSE TOUCH WITH ME AGAIN.
DON'T YOU HAVE OTHER LOYAL CLIENTS LIKE ME?
I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO TOUCH MY HANDS!
YOU CAN'T FORGET TO BE PROFESSIONAL. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
YES...

HI. MAY I HELP YOU?
ARE YOU MEETING SOMEONE HERE?
AH, WELL...

MAMIKO, YOU'RE SO DRUNK!
OH, PLEASE, YU, CHEER ME UP MORE!!
YUSUKE...

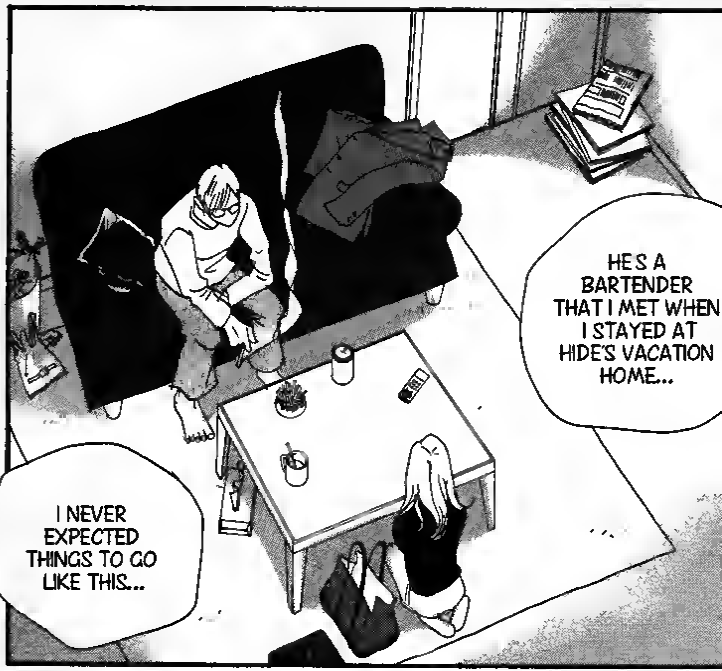
YOU'RE NAÏVE.
YOU SHOULD BE OPEN WITH YUSUKE. AND STRAIGHT WITH HIROYUKI.

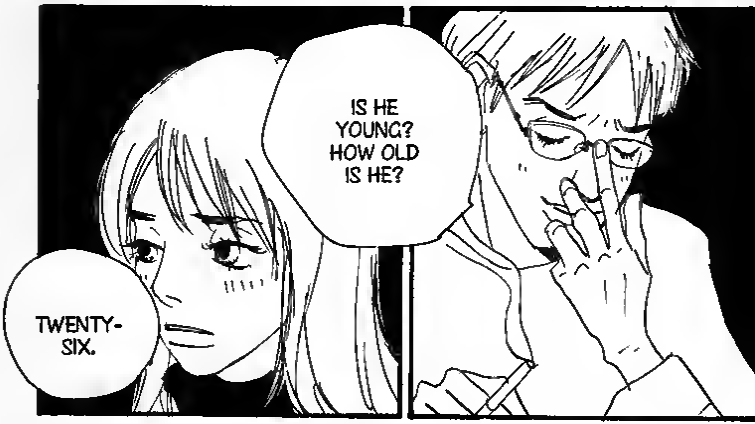
YUSUKE IS IN THE BAR...
...ISN'T THAT THE YUSUKE THAT I KNOW?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW HIM ANYMORE.
I'M SORRY. I'LL COME BACK LATER.

HIDE WAS RIGHT.
I HAVE TO GET THINGS STRAIGHTENED OUT...
...WITH HIROYUKI AND WORK...
...AND YUSUKE...

HELLO...
HIROYUKI?
IS THIS SAYUMI?
BEEP
BEEP BEEP
CAN I COME OVER?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING.

WHAT'S WRONG?
COME IN.
HIROYUKI...
PLEASE, COME IN.


HE'S A BARTENDER THAT I MET WHEN I STAYED AT HIDE'S VACATION HOME...
I NEVER EXPECTED THINGS TO GO LIKE THIS...


IS HE YOUNG? HOW OLD IS HE?
TWENTY-SIX.

HIROYUKI, YOU WERE JUST HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH HER.
BUT MY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT. I'M MORE SERIOUS WITH HIM.
THE THING IS...
...YOU JUMPED ALL OVER ME FOR WALKING OUT OF A BAR WITH A GIRL.
BUT THEN YOU WERE CHEATING ON ME.

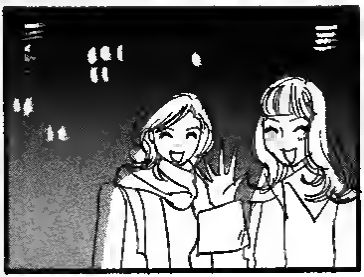
HIROYUKI, WE HAVE TO END THIS OFFICIALLY.
YOU SHUT UP, BITCH!
UNLIKE YOURS, MINE WAS A MORE PLATONIC LOVE. NOTHING HAPPENED WITH THAT GIRL!

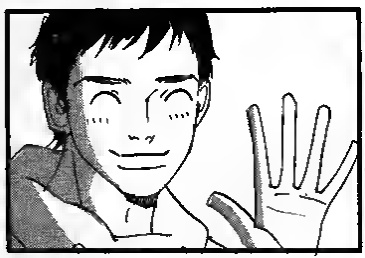
I...
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU DON'T LIKE ABOUT ME..?
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIROYUKI CRY LIKE THIS.
I SERIOUSLY...
...LOVE YOU... ONLY YOU...
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...

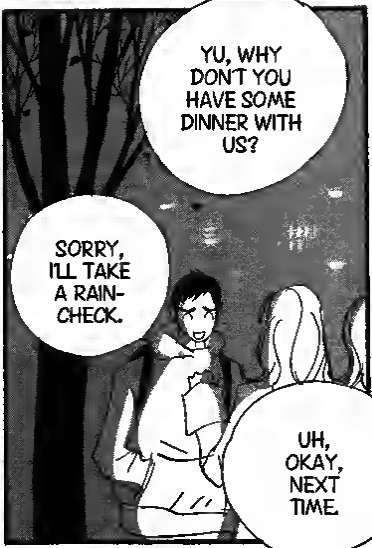
SO, WHY...?
EVEN SEEING HIM LIKE THIS...
...I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU DON'T LIKE ABOUT ME, I'LL CHANGE IT.
JUST DON'T TELL ME YOU WANT TO BREAK UP WITH ME.
WE CAN NEVER GO BACK.
REALLY, YOU HAVE IT WRONG.
I DON'T HATE YOU, HIROYUKI.
I JUST...
...WANT TO BE WITH SOMEONE ELSE RIGHT NOW.

.....
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
I'M NOT GOING TO END OUR RELATION-SHIP.
I WON'T BREAK UP WITH YOU.

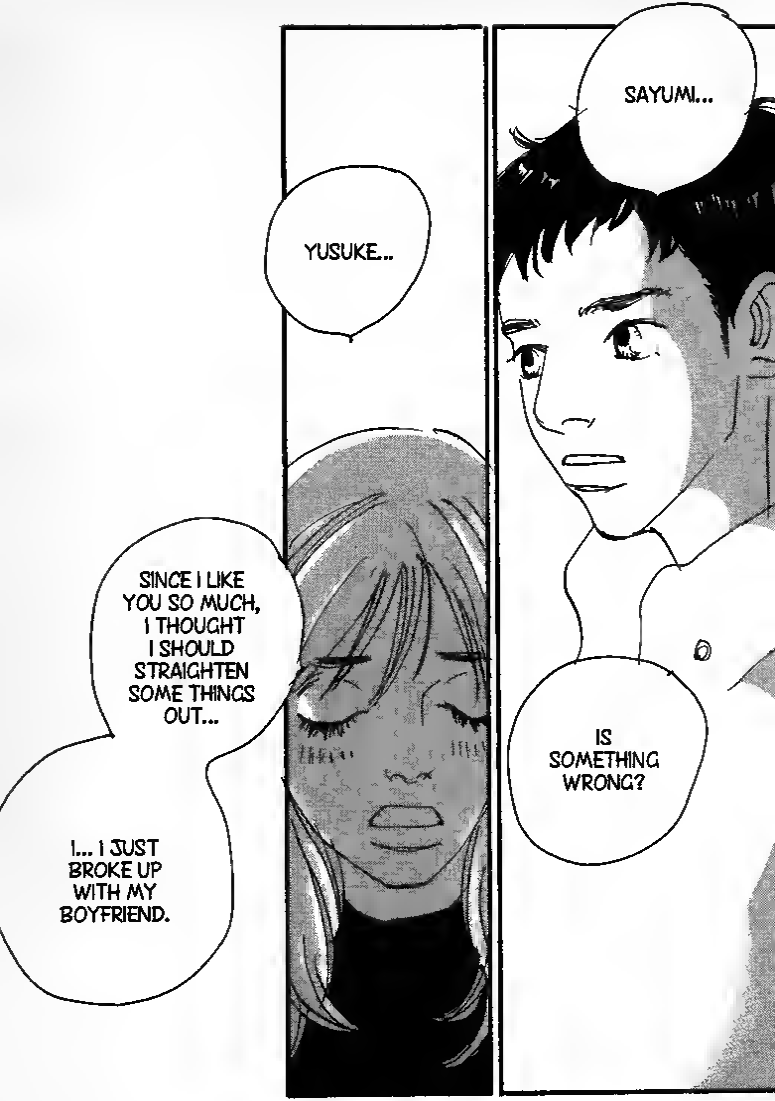
SEE YUH!
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
BAR



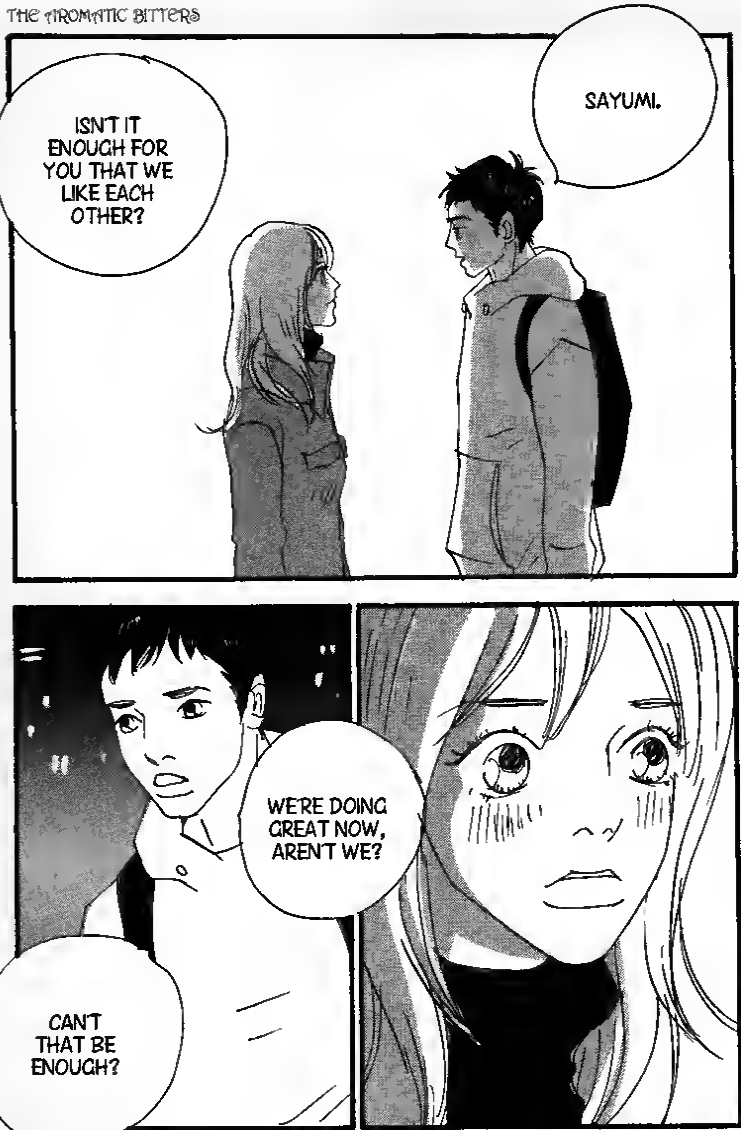


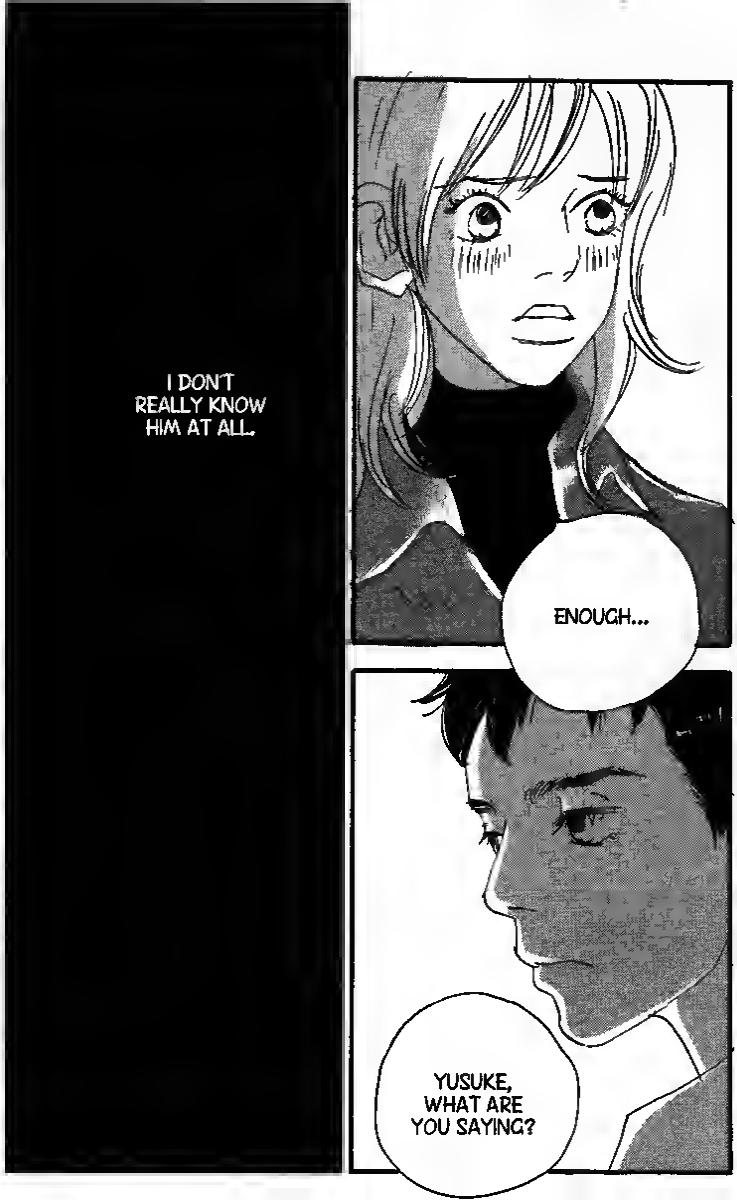

YU, WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SOME DINNER WITH US?
SORRY, I'LL TAKE A RAIN-CHECK.
UH, OKAY, NEXT TIME.

HMN.
SAYUMI? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HUH...?
I WANTED TO SEE YOU.
I KNOW...
I ALWAYS GO STRAIGHT HOME AFTER WORK.


SAYUMI...
YUSUKE...
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
SINCE I LIKE YOU SO MUCH, I THOUGHT I SHOULD STRAIGHTEN SOME THINGS OUT...
I... I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY BOYFRIEND.

WE TALKED ABOUT GETTING MARRIED, BUT NOW WE'RE NOT DOING SO WELL.
EVEN IF I HADN'T MET YOU, I DON'T THINK WE WOULD HAVE MADE IT...
.....
YUSUKE...?
WHAT?
I'M SORRY, BUT I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO TELL YOU. I HAD A BOYFRIEND THAT I WAS WITH FOR FIVE YEARS.


SAYUMI.
ISN'T IT ENOUGH FOR YOU THAT WE LIKE EACH OTHER?
WE'RE DOING GREAT NOW, AREN'T WE?
CAN'T THAT BE ENOUGH?


I DON'T REALLY KNOW HIM AT ALL.
ENOUGH...
YUSUKE, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

act 5

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUSBAND AND WIFE?

I THINK ABOUT IT QUITE OFTEN LATELY.

20 YEARS SINCE I GOT MARRIED. I THINK I'M HAPPY.

HE NEVER EATS BREAKFAST, AND JUST LEAVES STRAIGHT FOR WORK ON DAYS AFTER HE'S BEEN DRUNK.

WHETHER OR NOT HE EATS IT, I ALWAYS COOK BREAKFAST FOR HIM.
THAT'S THE ONLY THING I'VE BEEN DOING FOR TWENTY YEARS.
THIS RECEIPT...
...FOR A LINGERIE SHOP?!
IF I IGNORE IT ALL, EVERY DAY IS BUSY AND JUST GOES BY QUICKLY.
I HAVE A PRIVATE ENGLISH LESSON IN THE MORNING TODAY...
...THEN AN APPOINTMENT AT A HAIR SALON IN THE AFTERNOON.
I'M WONDERING IF I CAN GO GROCERY SHOPPING IN BETWEEN

RIGHT.

I SHOULDN'T BE BOTHERED BY SUCH THINGS.

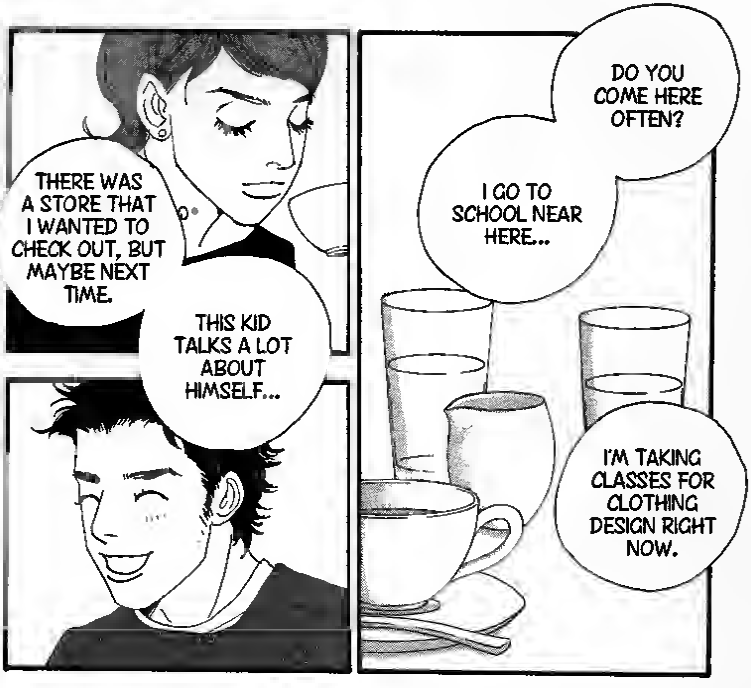
I HAVE SO MANY THINGS TO OCCUPY MYSELF.

...LIKE A LESSON FOR FLOWER ARRANGING THAT BEGINS NEXT WEEK...

...LIKE CLASSES TO BUY...

MOST OF ALL, A NEW SWEATER FOR SPRING...

I THINK THAT YOU ARE VERY BEAUTIFUL...
WELL... UH...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE SOME TEA WITH ME?


THERE WAS A STORE THAT I WANTED TO CHECK OUT, BUT MAYBE NEXT TIME.
THIS KID TALKS A LOT ABOUT HIMSELF...
DO YOU COME HERE OFTEN?
I GO TO SCHOOL NEAR HERE...
I'M TAKING CLASSES FOR CLOTHING DESIGN RIGHT NOW.

BUT I RARELY GO TO BED WITH ANY OF THEM.

WE GO OUT TO DINNER AND MOVIES.

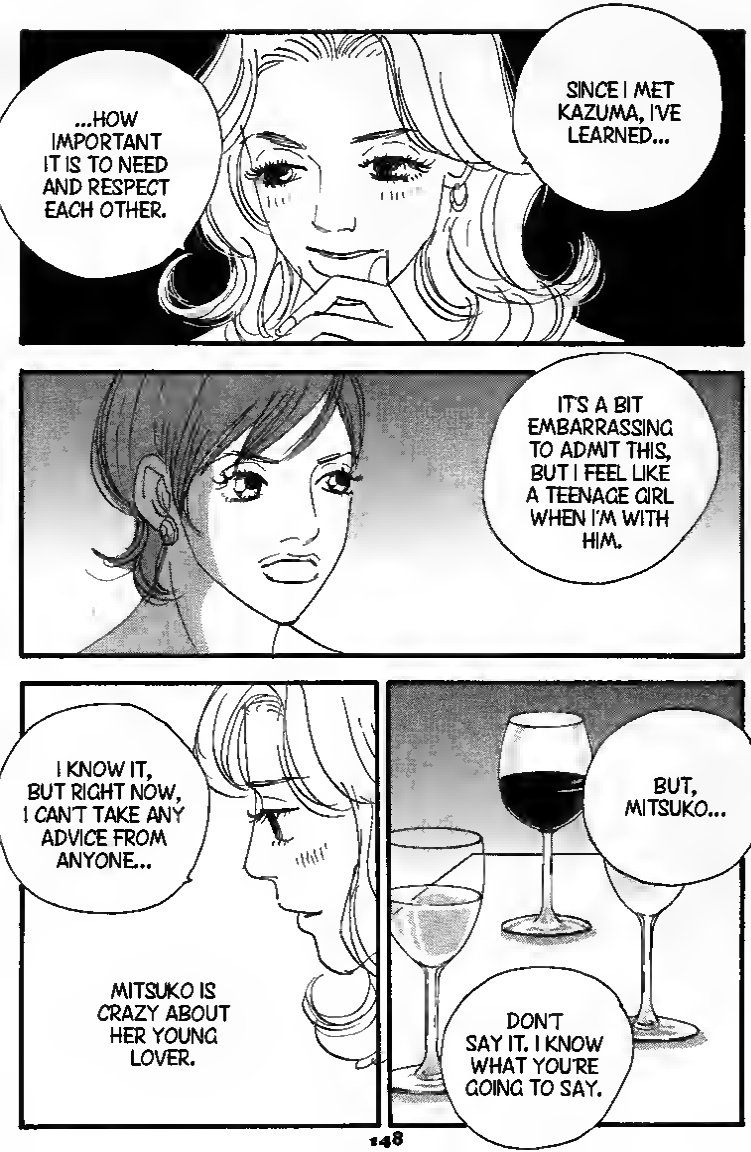
I HAVE SOME BOYS THAT I HANG OUT WITH.

WHAT THEY WANT FROM OLDER WOMEN LIKE ME IS TIME, MONEY, AND EASY SEX. I KNOW LOVE IS THE LAST THING THAT THEY WANT.

MAYBE IT'S THE LAST THING I WANT.

COME TO THINK OF IT, SAYUMI...
I WONDER HOW SHE'S DOING WITH YUSUKE?
WHAT I WANT FROM YOUNG BOYS IS YOUTH, NO COMPLICATIONS...
...A LITTLE EXCITEMENT AND FUN.
IT CAN NEVER BE LOVE.

JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'M THINKING ABOUT GETTING A DIVORCE.
WHAT?! YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING?!
LISTEN, HIDE...
...MY HUSBAND AND I HAVEN'T HAD SEX IN YEARS.
WE'RE LIKE THAT, TOO.
WE AREN'T LIKE YOU. WE DON'T HAVE EVEN A LITTLE LOVE FOR EACH OTHER ANYMORE.


SINCE I MET KAZUMA, I'VE LEARNED...
...HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO NEED AND RESPECT EACH OTHER.
IT'S A BIT EMBARRASSING TO ADMIT THIS, BUT I FEEL LIKE A TEENAGE GIRL WHEN I'M WITH HIM.
I KNOW IT, BUT RIGHT NOW, I CAN'T TAKE ANY ADVICE FROM ANYONE...
MITSUKO IS CRAZY ABOUT HER YOUNG LOVER.
BUT, MITSUKO...
DON'T SAY IT. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY.

ISN'T OUR LOVE BASED ON A STABLE LIFE?
SHE SHOULD ALREADY KNOW...
IS SHE PRETENDING TO BE IN LOVE?
IS IT FUN TO PLAY A GAME LIKE THAT?
FOR ME, IT SOUNDS LIKE A WASTE OF TIME.

HELLO. IS THAT YOU?
WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?
ピピピ
OH, IT'S MY HUSBAND.
WILL YOU EXCUSE ME FOR A SECOND?
I'M AT NISHI AZABU HAVING DINNER WITH MITSUKO. WHAT'S GOING ON?
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. I'LL COME HOME EARLY TONIGHT.
SOMETHING TO TALK TO ME...? THAT'S STRANGE.

I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
LAST TIME HE SAID THAT HE HAD SOMETHING TO TALK TO ME ABOUT WAS WHEN HIS COMPANY WAS ALMOST BANKRUPT.

I'M SO SORRY!
PLEASE DON'T SAY ANYTHING AND JUST DIVORCE ME.
WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR TWENTY YEARS. DO YOU THINK I CAN JUST SAY "YES, I'LL DIVORCE YOU?"
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "DON'T SAY ANYTHING?"
WAIT A SECOND...

ACTUALLY...
...I'M SEEING SOMEONE.

I NEED AN EXPLANATION TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON.

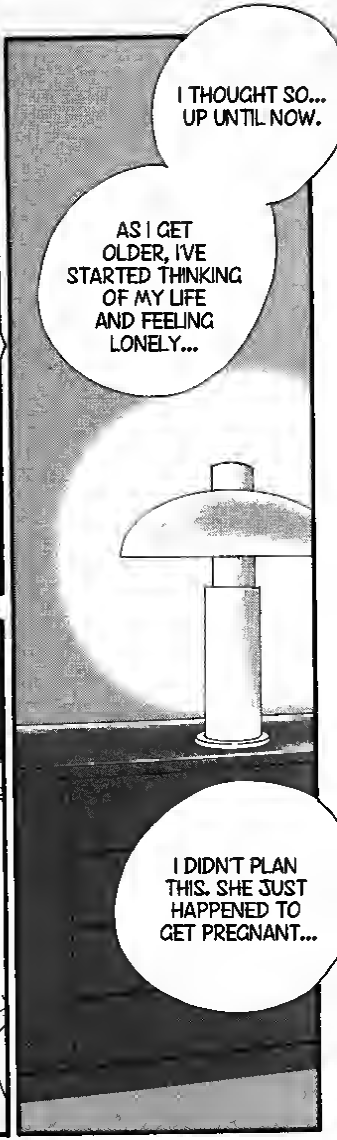
.....

SHE'S PREGNANT.

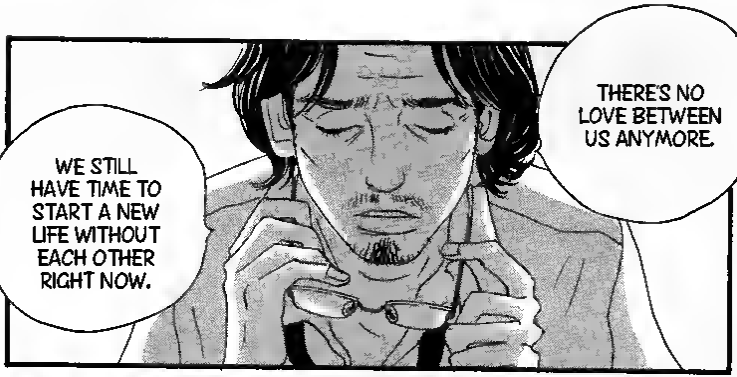
THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY GIRLS, HAVEN'T THERE?!
THAT CAN'T BE AN EXCUSE.

WHAT IS THIS...?
ARE YOU JOKING?
YOU SAID THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT CHILDREN.
SHE'LL HAVE THE BABY THIS SPRING.
ABOUT SIX MONTHS ALONG NOW...
YOU WANTED TO ENJOY YOUR SIMPLE LIFE.
THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T WANT KIDS WITH ME...

I WON'T DIVORCE YOU FOR SUCH A LAME REASON!
IF YOU WANT HER CHILD, WHY DON'T WE JUST ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PATERNITY?


I THOUGHT SO... UP UNTIL NOW.
AS I GET OLDER, I'VE STARTED THINKING OF MY LIFE AND FEELING LONELY...
I DIDN'T PLAN THIS. SHE JUST HAPPENED TO GET PREGNANT...

HIDE...
THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY.



IGNORING THAT HE WAS CHEATING ON ME...

COOKING BREAKFAST THAT HE NEVER EATS...

I THOUGHT I WAS DOING THIS FOR LOVE.

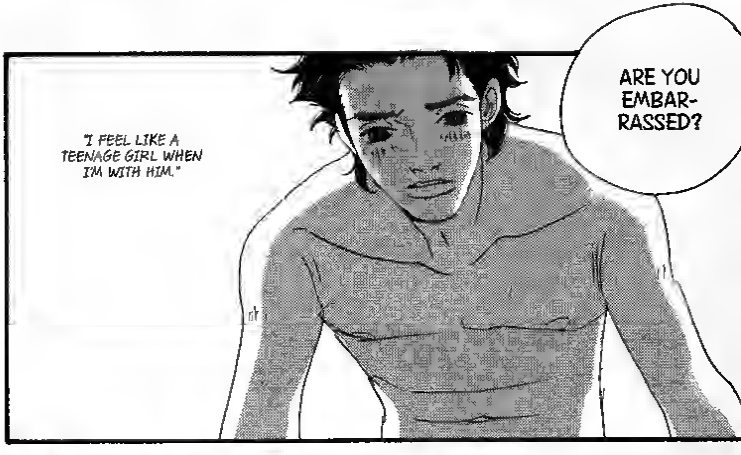
AT LEAST, I LOVED YOU.
I FELT THAT WAY THE WHOLE TIME.

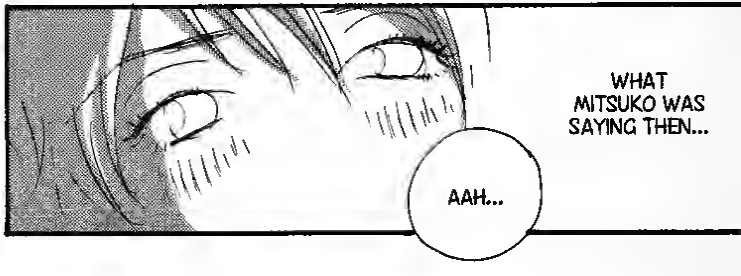
ALTHOUGH I CRIED SO MUCH LAST NIGHT...
A MARRIAGE WOULDN'T SURVIVE IF YOU DIDN'T FEEL THAT WAY.
...I'M TAKING A WALK WITH CHOCOLATE THIS MORNING.

YOU WOULD THINK THAT BEING A WOMAN FOR FORTY YEARS...
...I WOULDN'T GET HURT SO EASILY.
I SURE DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I WANTED TO COOK BREAKFAST FOR HIM THIS MORNING.
I WONDER IF I SHOULD GO TO THAT MOVIE THAT I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SEE?
I HAVE TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR MY NAILS, TOO.
I SHOULD GO TO THE SALON AND HAVE MY SWOLLEN FACE MASSAGED.
WHO IS IT?
HELLO.
HELLO... YABE SPEAKING...

PERFECT TIMING.
WHAT?
I NEED SOMEONE TO COMFORT ME TODAY.
WELL... WE HAD TEA TOGETHER AT SHIBUYA, DIDN'T WE?
RIGHT! I'M SO GLAD THAT YOU REMEMBERED ME.
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

HIDE...
YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL.
TAKE OFF ALL YOUR CLOTHES AND LET ME SEE YOU...
AH... STOP IT.
IS EVERYTHING OKAY...?
UM...





...THIS MUST BE THE FEELING.

HIDE.
HUH?
I THINK I'M GOING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU.

DON'T SAY SUCH A THING SO EASILY. YOU'LL REGRET IT LATER.
WHAT? WHY?
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A DIVORCE RIGHT NOW.
IT'S LUCKY WHEN THE WOMAN YOU LOVE BECOMES SINGLE.
LET'S HAVE LOTS OF SEX AND CHILDREN!
HOW'S THAT? HEAVY, HUH?
NOT AT ALL!

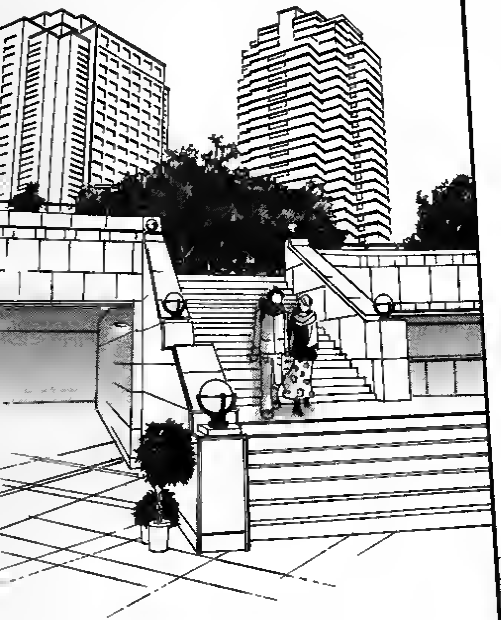
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID ON THE NEWS THE OTHER DAY.
WHY?
PEOPLE CAN HAVE KIDS AT 60 NOW, DON'T YOU KNOW?
CHILDREN... YOU KNOW HOW OLD I AM...
YOU AND ME AND CHILDREN. DOESN'T IT SOUND FUN?
I LOVE CHILDREN, SO I WANT TO DO THAT FOR SURE.

OOPS...?
DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?!
HEY, WAIT...

I DIDN'T GIVE IT UP FOR MY HUSBAND.

I THOUGHT IT WAS BEST FOR OUR LIFE TOGETHER.

NOT HAVING CHILDREN WAS ALSO MY CHOICE.



HEY, YABE.
IF I BEGIN MY LIFE WITH SOMEONE ELSE, THERE WILL BE OTHER CHOICES.
I DON'T LIKE THAT.
WHAT?
DO I STILL HAVE TIME FOR THAT?
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
THANKS TO YOU, I FEEL MUCH BETTER NOW.

CALL ME ANYTIME WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN.
YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE SAYING THAT YOU WON'T SEE ME AGAIN.
HMN.
NO MATTER WHERE I AM, I'LL FLY TO YOUR PLACE, HIDE.
THANK YOU.

to be continued

Manga
Romance
USA $9.99

100% AUTHENTIC MANGA

when two gal pals go on a road trip, anything can happen!

Sayumi and Hide are two friends cursed with the same fate: They're both stuck in dead-end relationships, and neither can find their way out. When they decide to hit the road and go to Hide's country home for the summer, they learn loads about love, life, and each other. **The Aromatic Bitters** follows the lives of two women with nothing left to lose but their inhibitions.

ISBN 1591823226

MATURE AGES 16+

www.TOKYOPOP.com